

education, and the patronage and support of all those institutions, formed for the improvement and happiness of his species? The name of a Cosmo or a Gresham, offers to true ambition the noblest excitement. May we not hope to find in the enlightened minds of American merchants, that liberal spirit, which will make them their country's benefactors; rather than that selfish and degrading feeling, which grasps at unbounded wealth, either to gloat over its accumulated hoards, or to poison public and private morals by unmeaning show and destructive luxury. And may we not discern the dawning of that spirit, in those noble endowments of literary and scientific institutions, which have connected commercial names with the merited pre-eminence of a sister city; and in that curious and beautiful collection, by which the taste and liberality of one of our own merchants, have opened to our view, the mysteries of the Celestial empire?

If we have much to hope from the influence of commerce in shedding its genial rays over our social life, we have even a deeper interest in its effect on the preservation of our political institutions. Interest grapples men together "with hooks of steel;" and every new avenue to commercial intercourse between the distant parts of our extended country is a strengthening band to our com-  
...ct, which not even the designing hand of the selfish politician can sever or unloose. And carrying our views forward beyond the limits of this blessed land, we may hail the influence of commerce as that benign spirit which will make "peace o'er the world, her olive wand extend," enlarge the intercourse of mind with mind, and diffuse the mild light of true religion to "earth's remotest regions."

"Heaven speed the canvass, gallantly unfurled,  
To furnish and accommodate the world;  
To give the poles the product of the sun,  
And knit the unsocial climates into one."

## MEMOIRS

OF

## The Musical Drama.

BY GEORGE HOGARTH,

AUTHOR OF "MUSICAL HISTORY, BIOGRAPHY, AND CRITICISM."

## PREFACE.

The author of the following pages has called them *Memoirs*, not a *History*, of the Musical Drama; because, though he has endeavoured to give a connected, and (he hopes) tolerably comprehensive view of the progress of the Opera, yet he has not deemed it advisable to treat the subject with that degree of severity, in regard to form and substance, which "the dignity of History" might have required.

While he has attempted to trace the origin of the combination of music with theatrical exhibitions in those countries of Europe which possess a national opera; to show how the progress of the opera in one of these countries acted on its progress in the others; to give an account of the principal works belonging to this branch of the drama, which have appeared in these various countries, and of the manner in which the production of these works contributed to the advancement of the art; and to take a critical view of the qualities and merits of the most distinguished poets, musicians, and performers belonging to the lyrical stage; he has interwoven these particulars with many details, anecdotes, and circumstances connected with the opera, calculated to throw light on the lives and characters of eminent individuals, as well as to afford glimpses of the state of society and manners in different ages and countries.

The method followed by the author will be seen at a glance from the table of contents. He will only observe that, in these *Memoirs* of the past, he has not entered into details respecting the present state of the musical drama, or into critical observations on the merits of contemporaries whose names do not yet belong to musical history.

The arrangement of such a work as the present must to a certain extent be arbitrary. Where history descends

in parallel streams, the narrative must of course follow them in succession, passing from the one to the other in such a manner as to keep contemporary occurrences as near to each other as possible. Particular points frequently present themselves at which the narrative may be conveniently broken off; but in many instances this must be done, simply because one branch of the history seems to be getting too much in advance of the others. In such instances no two writers would proceed in the same way; and no way that can be adopted will prevent a certain degree of inconvenience which must arise from the nature of the subject.

## CHAPTER I.

Origin of the musical drama—Mysteries, moralities, and masques—Allegorical and mythological entertainments in Italy during the fifteenth century—Intermezzi—Invention of recitative—Earliest Italian operas—Monteverde's use of instruments—First public performances at Rome—At Venice—Scroll-pieces—Italian singers of the seventeenth century.

We shall not attempt, as many writers have done, to go back to the days of the Greeks and Romans in search of the origin of the Musical Drama. In the ancient tragedy, it appears, the declamation of the actor was accompanied by certain musical instruments which regulated the tones of his voice; and the stage was occupied by a *Chorus* consisting of a number of persons, who, though not actually engaged in the action of the piece, were interested in it, and mingled their reflections or exclamations with the dialogue of the drama. In the modern opera the characters speak in recitative, and there is a chorus; and hence it is inferred that the modern opera has sprung from the ancient tragedy. It is probable that the idea of recitative was suggested to its inventors by what they had read of the musical declamation of the ancient tragedies; and the chorus of an Italian opera is very analogous, in its functions and connection with the drama, to the chorus of the Greeks. But the one cannot be said to have been derived from the other; for, before the invention of the opera, the knowledge of the mode of performing the ancient tragedy had been irrecoverably lost by the lapse of a long series of ages.

The modern theatre, of every description, may be traced to those dramatic entertainments which seem to have been common in the darkest periods of the middle ages. Mankind has a natural propensity to mimicry and the representation of feigned characters. Children begin to act as soon as they can speak; and there is hardly any tribe that is without some notion of inventing and performing plays. When Europe was immersed in ignorance, those fictitious representations called *Mysteries* and *Moralities* were the favourite pastime of all sorts of people. As learning and civilisation advanced, these uncouth entertainments gained some degree of refinement and regularity, and acquired something of the form of those ancient dramatic pieces which now came to be known and studied. In this way the modern drama, though originating in the middle ages, may be considered as having received its polish and cultivation from the models of classical antiquity.

It was thus that the opera, as well as the other branches of the drama, took its rise. Songs, choruses, and dances, were introduced into the rude exhibitions we have mentioned, and, indeed, continued to form a part of all dramatic representations down to a comparatively recent period. The union of dialogue and action with music, dancing, and pageantry, produced that species of entertainment known by the name of the *Masque*, which enjoyed its greatest favour in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and was the immediate forerunner of the opera.

This has been the progress of the Musical Drama in all those countries where it now flourishes; but it was in Italy that it first assumed a distinct form. In that country, the *Mystery*, or religious tragedy gradually assumed the shape of the *Oratorio*, or sacred musical drama; and the *Masque*, or secular play, intermixed with music and *spectacle*, was converted into the regular opera. The oratorio, as well as the opera, of other countries, were derived from those of Italy.

When the religious dramas, divested of their profanities and grossness, were introduced into the church, and distinguished by the name of Oratorios, they were no

longer acted as they had formerly been. The poem was generally in a dramatic form, and, in the performance, each part was allotted to a different singer; but the piece was merely sung and recited, without action, or any of the adjuncts of theatrical representation. Such is the shape which the oratorio has ever since retained. Many oratorios have not a vestige of the dramatic form, even in the structure of the poem, or the composition of the music. The greatest of Handel's oratorios, for instance, *The Messiah*, and *Israel in Egypt*, with many others which might be mentioned, are not dramatic in any sense of the word. The oratorio, therefore is improperly classed under the head of the Musical Drama. It belongs to the church, not to the theatre; and a musical drama, on a sacred subject, adapted for theatrical representation (such as Rossini's well known *Mosè in Egitto*) is not an oratorio, but an opera.

The very term, oratorio, applied to these performances of sacred music, shows that they were connected with the service of the church. The word, derived from the Latin "oratorium," means a chapel containing an altar, where the devout can offer up their prayers. The Italian writers agree in ascribing the origin of the oratorio to San Filippo Neri, who founded the congregation of the oratory at Rome, in the year 1540. This was an order, or establishment of priests, which gradually spread itself all over Italy. It was their practice to render the service of the church as agreeable as possible, in order to attract young people thither, and draw them away from stage-plays and other profane amusements. For this purpose they began by the introduction of canticles, and spiritual songs and choruses; and afterwards, to increase the attraction, scripture stories and incidents were formed into dramatic poems, written in dialogue, and set to music by the best composers of the time. These productions were recited and sung, with the accompaniment of instruments, before and after the sermon; so that the attention of the congregation was thus (it was presumed) secured to the religious instructions of the preacher. These pieces were founded on the story of the good Samaritan, the trials of Job, the prodigal son, the annunciation of the Blessed Virgin, and other subjects calculated to excite the feelings or the imagination of the auditory.\* They speedily acquired great popularity; and oratorios became common in the principal churches throughout Italy, where indeed they are regularly performed to this day. In Italy the performance of oratorios is still confined to the churches. In this and other countries, they are also performed in public halls, concert rooms, and even theatres; but in no case, not even when the poem is in a dramatic form, is there the slightest approach to dramatic representation.

\* An English traveller gives the following account of these performances at Bologna, in 1720. "They have in their churches a diverting piece of devotion, which they call an oratorio. It is a musical drama of two acts, after the manner of the stage-operas, with *recitativo* between the songs. The subject is either a scripture story, or a story of some of their saints; generally the last. Between the acts there is a sermon; so timed (I suppose) to secure such of the audience as might be apt to leave the preacher in the lurch, if they were not to have some music to sweeten their mouths with at last. The whole is introduced with a performance somewhat unusual, a *Discorso* (as they term it) spoken by a little boy. We heard two of them. The first was about six years old, who mounted the rostrum with a stately gravity, and, after having saluted the audience, cocked his hat, (for they are covered upon such occasions in the churches) and, with a solemn wave of the hand, pronounced, *silenzio!* before he began his discourse. The latter could not be above four years old, both by his size and speech, for he could but just speak plain; him they dressed up in the habit of a priest, and the little creature performed to a miracle. The subject of the discourse is taken from the occasion of their meeting. The former was upon the eve of All Souls: charity to our friends in purgatory was the topic. The latter was on the night of the grand procession on account of the plague, which was then at Marseilles: of that, repentance and humiliation was the subject. They teach these little orators, not only the emphasis and accent, but the proper action likewise, which they perform extremely well."—*Wright's Observations in travelling through France, Italy, &c.*

In the sketch, therefore, which we are about to give of the progress of the Musical Drama, we shall not include the oratorio; considering it as being neither comprehended in our subject nor at all connected with it.

The oldest of those entertainments which ripened into the Italian musical drama, belong to the fifteenth century. They were not performed in public theatres, but in the halls of the great, by whom they were given for the amusement of distinguished guests. Thus we have a description of an entertainment given in 1480, by Bergontio Botta, a nobleman of Lombardy, when he was visited by the Duke of Milan and his newly-married spouse, Isabella of Arragon, grand-daughter of Ferdinand, king of Naples. To these illustrious guests he gave a magnificent supper, accompanied with an exhibition in which the rudiments of the opera may be plainly discerned.

The play, as it may be called, was begun by Jason bringing in the golden fleece, with which he covered the supper-table. Then Mercury made his appearance, and sang the stratagems by which he had contrived to steal from Apollo, who kept the flocks of Admetus, king of Thessaly, a fat calf for this banquet. Diana brought Actæon changed into a stag; and, after having explained to the company her cause of quarrel with him, told him that, notwithstanding his misdeed, she would do him the grace of having him served up at a feast given to a nymph so fair and chaste as the royal Isabella. Orpheus, who still mourned the loss of his Eurydice, having heard, even amidst the wilds of the Apennines, of the fame of these nuptials, came with his lyre, to sing the praises of the illustrious pair; and, having drawn a great many birds around him by the sweetness of his strains, he gallantly offered them to the princess. Atalanta brought the head of the Calydonian boar; confessing that she yielded to this stranger nymph the glory of being adored by all the Grecian youth. The rest of the boar was brought in by Theseus and a band of hunters. Iris appeared on her chariot drawn by peacocks, and made one of them be served up with its splendid tail displayed. Hebe presented the nectar of the gods. Apicius came from the Elysian fields to increase the delicacy of the feast by his refinements in the gastronomic art. A party of Arcadian shepherds served up a cheese made by the hands of Pan himself. Vertumnus and Pomona presented the finest fruits; and all sorts of salt and fresh water fish were brought in by the gods of the sea and the rivers of Lombardy. All these acts of service were accompanied by musical recitations; and, when this prologue was finished, the guests sat down to the feast so classically served up. The repast was followed by another exhibition, approaching more nearly to a regular drama. Orpheus commenced it, by introducing Hymen, followed by a group of Cupids. The three Graces, hand in hand, formed the second scene. They were followed by Conjugal Fidelity, dressed in white, who offered her services to the princess; and, at the same time, Mercury brought down from heaven Fame, accompanied by Virgil and Livy. After them came Semiramis, with Helen, Medea, and Cleopatra; and these having begun to sing their wanton loves, were driven away by Conjugal Faith, who forbade them to sully the purity of so sacred an union by the recital of their improprieties. She then let loose upon them a band of Cupids, who pursued them with lighted torches, and set fire to the gauze veils which covered them. Then appeared Lucretia, Penelope, Thomyris Queen of Scythia, Judith, and Portia, who, having rendered themselves famous by the purity of their lives, came to present to the young duchess, the palm of chastity which the world had bestowed upon them. Last of all, Silenus, half drunk, and riding on his ass, concluded the piece by singing humorous verses.

An ingenious allegorical piece called *La Verita Ramminga*, was represented at Venice about this time, but on what occasion we are not informed.

The first scene represented a doctor and an apothecary, rejoicing that the ills of the world were their good, and that the earth covered their misdoings. Truth, abused and pelted by a band of advocates, attorneys, and suitors, appears in a sad plight, and begs the assistance of the doctor and his companion;—but they make their escape as soon as they find that the name of the applicant is Truth. A cavalier offers to defend her, but leaves her as soon as she tells him her name. A soldier next abandons her, because she begins to laugh at his boasting speeches. The first part of the piece was ended by a

rustic dance of villagers. In the second part, a merchant appears, congratulating himself, that, in order to get rich, he has only to break two or three times, and settle as often with his creditors. In the next scene another merchant wishes to get rid of his conscience as a troublesome and unmarketable commodity. Truth offers to buy, but he will have nothing to do with her as a purchaser. She meets with similar repulses from ladies of various classes: but at last the Dramatic Muse consents to receive her on condition that she shall appear on the stage under an agreeable disguise: for which purpose she furnishes her with a mask, and teaches her the art of changing her voice and manner. The conclusion is the singing and dancing of the comedians, expressive of their joy at the admission of Truth, thus disguised, into their company.

These specimens of the rude dramatic attempts of the Italians, are instances of the love of allegory which seems to have prevailed, in other countries as well as Italy, in those early ages, when Poetry, after her revival, was yet in her second childhood. The subjects of these dramatic pieces, however, were not always allegorical. Some of them were classical, and very like those of a much later period. Perhaps the *Orfeo* of the celebrated poet and scholar Politian, may be regarded as the lineal progenitor of the Italian opera. It is to be found in the *Parnaso Italiano*; and is a drama in five acts, founded on the ancient fable of Orpheus and Eurydice. The subject of the first act is the love of Aristæus, a Thracian shepherd, for Eurydice, the wife of Orpheus, who, endeavouring to escape from him, is stung by a serpent, and dies. The shepherd sings his love and her cruelty, in a pastoral strain of great beauty. The second act consists of the lamentations of Aristæus, accompanied by a chorus of dryads, for the death of Eurydice. In the third act, Orpheus, appears, singing in *Latin* heroic verse the exploits of Hercules. A dryad tells him the sorrowful tale of Eurydice's death; and a satyr follows him to see whether the mountains are moved by his song. The fourth act contains the descent of Orpheus into the infernal regions, his recovery of Eurydice, and her final loss. In the fifth act, the Thracian women, enraged at his inconsolable grief and resolution never to love another, fall upon him and tear him to pieces. This drama, which is very short, seems intended to have been wholly sung, the poetry being of a lyrical kind and finely adapted to the purposes of music. It must have been written towards the end of the fifteenth century, as Politian, who is celebrated as one of the revivers of learning, died in 1494, at the age of forty.

During the sixteenth century, the Italian drama became gradually more and more regular in its form. In the infancy of the Italian stage, music seems to have been employed in all dramatic pieces. When the dialogue was declaimed, or spoken, choruses were introduced, who sang the prologue and epilogue, and also verses between the acts. By degrees, the musical drama came to be separated from tragedy and comedy; the prologues and epilogues being no longer sung, but merely declaimed, as well as the dialogue; and, in these pieces, the choruses began to be laid aside. But musical *intermezzi*, or Interludes, were introduced between the acts; and these, though interrupted by the action of the principal piece, were frequently regular dramas themselves; so that a tragedy or comedy, with its interludes, were, in truth, two distinct pieces performed in alternate acts. The *intermezzi* were composed expressly for the drama, along with which they were to be performed, and had some affinity to their style or subject. They were sometimes considered of importance enough to be separately published; of which we have an instance, in one of them published at Bologna, in 1623, under the title of "*Dafne Converta in Lauro*; *Intermezzi posti in musica da Ottavio Vernizzi, Organista di San Petronio, per L'Amorosa Innocenza*, Tragicomedia Pastorale, in Bologna, 1623. By this time music had acquired a dramatic importance which it did not possess a very short time before; for, in a Discourse on Dramatic Representation, by Angelo Ingegneri, published in 1598, that writer speaks of music as a minor consideration. "I now come to music," he says, "the third and last part of dramatic representation, which, in comedies and pastorals without choruses, may be used at pleasure, in interludes between the acts, to afford some relief to the mind, fatigued by the attention bestowed upon the fable." At last, these *intermezzi*, which were really independent of

the pieces to which they were originally joined, were performed by themselves, and received the name of *Operas*; though operas of a light and comic character continued long afterwards, to go by the name of *intermezzi*.

The invention of *Recitative*, from which the existence of the Italian opera may properly be dated, took place in the end of the sixteenth century. The honour of this invention is ascribed to two persons; Jacopo Peri, of Florence, and Emilio del Cavaliere, of Rome. In the same year, 1597, Peri produced the opera of *Dafne*, and Emilio del Cavaliere the oratorio, *Dell' Anima e del Corpo*; and both of these pieces, too, were published in the same year, 1600. The invention is claimed by both composers, and it seems impossible now to determine which of them has the preferable claim. They both speak of it as an attempt to revive what was imagined to be the musical declamations of the Greeks and Romans. It is next to impossible that two persons should have separately constructed, on so slight a foundation, a musical language so entirely new. One of them must have borrowed it from the other; and it is to be regretted that it cannot be known to whom we are indebted for an invention which forms so remarkable an era in the history of music.\*

The introduction of airs for a single voice seems also to have taken place at this time. The music employed in the drama had previously consisted of compositions in many parts, full of elaborate harmonical contrivances, but destitute of grace, rhythm, or melody. Vincenzo Galilei is said to have been the first musician who composed melodies for a single voice; having (according to Doni) thus set to music Dante's famous scene of Count Ugolino, which he himself sang very sweetly, to the accompaniment of a viol. He was imitated by Giulio Caccini, a celebrated Roman singer, who composed a great number of airs which he taught to his numerous scholars, and created a taste for a new and elegant style of singing, previously unknown in Italy. Caccini is said to have assisted Peri in the composition of his operas.

Cavaliere's oratorio seems to have received this title because it was performed in church. It is not on a scriptural subject, but is a moral allegorical drama, such as were common at that time. The characters are Time, Pleasure, the Body, the World, Human Life, &c.; from which an idea may easily be formed of the nature of the subject. It was represented in action, on a stage erected in the church of La Vallicella, at Rome, with scenery, decorations, and dances. The orchestra was placed behind the scenes, and consisted of an instrument called a *lira doppia*, or double lyre, (conjectured to be a viol da gamba, a harpsichord, a large guitar, and two flutes *all' antica*). The dances were performed to the music of the choruses, and the directions respecting them sound very odd, considering the place of representation. "The performance," says the author, "may be finished with or without a dance. If without, the last chorus may be doubled in all its parts, vocal and instrumental; but if a dance is preferred, a verse beginning thus, 'Chiostri altissimi e stellati,' is to be sung, accompanied sedately and reverentially by the dance. Then shall succeed other grave steps and figures of the solemn kind. During the ritornelli the four principal dancers are to perform a ballet, enlivened with capers and entrechats, without singing. This is to be repeated after each stanza, always varying the steps of the dance; and the four principal

\* Burney, with some hesitation, decides in favour of Cavaliere, but on grounds which appear insufficient. He says, (vol. iv. p. 87.) that "Cavaliere seems better entitled to the invention of narrative music than the Florentine composer, by the very dates of the two dramas, which form an era in the history of the opera or oratorio: *L'Anima e il Corpo*, the first sacred drama or oratorio, in which recitative was used, having been performed in the oratory of the church of Santa Maria della Vallicella, at Rome, in February, 1600; and *Euridice*, the first secular drama, or opera, at Florence, in December of the same year." But the first opera produced at Florence was not *Euridice*, but *Dafne*, which, as we have mentioned above, was performed in 1597; and this fact is stated by Burney himself, vol. iv. p. 18. *Euridice* was produced by Peri, after *Dafne*.

† The instrumental passages between the stanzas of the chorus.

dancers may sometimes use the galliard, sometimes the canary, and sometimes the coranto step, which will do very well in the ritornels." Such was the way in which even the oratorio appears to have been performed in its infancy; till, in the progress of decorum, acting and dancing were excluded from the church and confined to the theatre.

Peri's opera of *Dafne* was performed in the house of Signor Corsi, a distinguished Florentine dilettante. The applause which it received induced Rinuccini, the poet and the composer to bring out in succession two other operas, *Euridice* and *Ariadne*. *Euridice* was the first opera which was performed in public. It formed part of the entertainments given at Florence, on the occasion of the marriage of Mary of Medicis to Henry IV. of France, in the year 1600; and the poem and the music were published separately the same year. Dr. Burney found a copy of the music in the library of the Marchese Rinuccini, (a descendant of the author of the poem,) at Florence. He says that the music was printed in score, and barred, two very uncommon circumstances at the time of its publication; that the recitative seemed to have been not only the model of subsequent composers of early Italian operas, but of the French operas of Lulli; but that though the word *aria* sometimes occurred, it was difficult to distinguish air from recitative. The orchestra, as at the performance of Cavaliere's oratorio, was placed behind the scenes, and consisted of the same instruments.

Claudio Monteverde, whose name is celebrated in musical history as one of the greatest discoverers in the then unknown regions of harmony, composed the opera of *Orfeo*, for the court of Mantua, in 1607. It was printed at Venice in 1615. The boldness of this composer's genius is observable in the great improvement of the orchestra. The number and variety of instruments are greatly increased, and the voices are not indiscriminately accompanied by the whole band; but the music performed by the several singers is accompanied by instruments of various kinds, specially assigned to each character. Thus, the Genius of Music, who speaks the prologue, is accompanied by two *gravicembali*, probably misprinted for *clavicembali*, or harpsichords; Orpheus by two *contrabassi di viola*, or bass viols; Eurydice by ten *viola di braccio*, or tenor viols; a chorus of nymphs and shepherds by an *arpa doppia*, or harp with double strings; Hope by two *violini piccoli alla francese*, a phrase which supports the claim of the French to the invention of the violin; Proserpina by three *bassi da gamba*, an instrument which has given place to the violoncello; and Pluto by four trombones. The overture is a very short prelude in harmony of five parts, for a trumpet and other instruments, which is directed to be played three times before the rising of the curtain. Then the prologue is delivered in recitative; its purport being to explain the argument of the piece and bespeak the attention of the audience. The opera begins by a speech in recitative by a shepherd, followed by a chorus in five parts, accompanied by all the instruments. Other choruses are directed to be accompanied in different ways—by guitars, violins, and flutes. There are no airs for a single voice, but recitatives, choruses, trios, and duets make up the piece, which concludes with a dance to a tune called a *morecca*, probably an original Moorish air. It is a lively strain, with a well-marked but peculiar rhythm, four times repeated, and ingeniously carried into different major and minor keys.\*

Monteverde's management of his orchestra, in the very infancy of this branch of the art, is worthy of particular notice; as he appears to have anticipated the principle of instrumentation which has been since adopted by the greatest dramatic composers, though it is now too much disregarded. In an Italian opera of the modern school, every instrument in the band is kept constantly at work, from the overture to the finale. The most tender and pathetic air or duet is accompanied, as well as a joyous or martial chorus, by violins, tenors, violoncellos, double-basses, flutes, oboes, clarinets, bassoons, horns, trumpets, trombones, and drums. What can be more absurd than this? The variety and effect of the orchestra are destroyed by such an indiscriminate and unmeaning use of all its resources. It was not thus that Gluck and Mozart, the models of dramatic instru-

mentation, employed the powers of the orchestra. Look into the opera scores of these great masters, and we shall hardly find the two scenes, or two movements, accompanied in the same manner. The different kinds of instruments are used in every variety of combination, so as to produce an endless diversity of effect, and to allow the united strength of the orchestra, when called into action, to produce its full impression on the audience. That system required learning, skill, and delicacy; the method now in vogue is a mere cloak for ignorance.

The following account of the first public performance of dramatic music, at Rome, is given by Pietro della Valla, an agreeable musical writer of that time. "My master, Quagliati, was an excellent maestro de capella, who introduced a new species of music into the churches of Rome, not only in compositions for a single voice, but for two, three, four, and very often more voices in chorus, singing together. And the music of my *cart*, or moveable stage, composed by the same Quagliati, and performed in masks through the streets of Rome during the Carnival of 1606, was the first dramatic action, or representation in music, which had ever been heard in that city. Though no more than five voices, or five instruments, were employed, the number which an ambulating cart could contain, yet these afforded great variety: as, beside the dialogue of single voices, sometimes two, or three, or all the five, sang together, which had an excellent effect. The music of this piece, as may be seen in the copies of it which were afterwards printed, though dramatic, was not all in simple recitative, which would have been tiresome, but ornamented with beautiful passages, and movements in measure, without deviating, however, from the true theatrical style; on which account it pleased extremely, as was manifest from the prodigious concourse of people it drew after it, who, instead of being tired, heard it five or six times over. There were even some who continued to follow our cart to ten or a dozen different places where it stopped, and never quitted us so long as we remained in the street, which was from four o'clock in the afternoon till after midnight."

The first public performance of musical pieces in a regular theatre, took place at Venice, in 1637, when the opera of *Andromeda*, written by Benedetto Ferrari, and composed by Francesco Manello, was brought upon the stage, in the theatre of Santo Cassiano, in a splendid manner, at the expense of the poet, who, for that purpose, collected a company of the best singers in Italy; a remarkable instance of spirit and enterprise. In the following year, *La Muga Fulminata*, by the same poet and composer, was performed in the same manner, and at the expense of the former. Between 1641 and 1649, there were upwards of thirty different operas performed in the several theatres of Venice, the composers of which were Monteverde, Manello, Cavalli, Sacrali, Ferrari, Fonte, Marazzoli, and Rovetta.

The most celebrated opera of that period was the *Orontea* of Marc' Antonio Cesti, which was first performed at Venice in 1649, and appears to have kept possession of the stage, in various cities, for nearly forty years. The music of these early operas is almost all lost, as very few of them were printed; but Dr. Burney gives a scene from this opera of *Orontea*, which was found in the music book of the celebrated painter, Salvator Rosa, in his own hand-writing. This scene, when compared with the specimens of Peri or Monteverde, exhibits a striking improvement in dramatic music. The air, which is in E minor, and in the time of three minims, is flowing, expressive, and modern in its effect, from the free use of the diminished seventh both in the melody and harmony. The recitative is *parlante*, and divested of the formal closes used by the older composers: indeed it differs very little from the recitative of the present day. And the concluding air in D major, is bold and spirited, with a firm moving bass very much in the manner of Handel. Of Cesti little more is known, than that he was admitted into the pope's chapel as a tenor singer in 1660, and produced several other operas, which had great success. He composed a great number of cantatas, many of which are still extant. Cavalli was at this period a prolific composer of operas, the most celebrated of which are *Giasone* and *Eriomena*. From what remains of his music, it seems to have been inferior to that of Cesti.

Venice appears to have taken the lead among all the cities of Italy, in respect to the musical drama. Between

1637, when *Andromeda* was produced, and 1700, we are told by Riccoboni, that three hundred and fifty operas were performed there. Operas were generally represented daily, and in six different theatres; all open at once. There was no public opera-house at Rome until 1671, nor at Bologna until 1680. In that year we have an account of the performance of the opera of *Berenice*, composed by Domenico Freschi, at Padua, in a style of splendour which reduces to insignificance the utmost achievements of scenic display, even in the present age of *spectacle*. In this opera (of the poetical or musical qualities of which there is no record) there were choruses of a hundred virgins and a hundred soldiers; a hundred horsemen in steel armour, a hundred performers on trumpets, cornets, sackbuts, drums, flutes, and other instruments, on horseback and on foot; two lions led by two Turks, and two elephants led by two others; Berenice's triumphal car drawn by four horses, and six other cars with spoils and prisoners drawn by twelve horses. Among the *scenes* in the first act, was a vast plain with two triumphal arches; another with pavilions and tents; a square, prepared for the entrance of the triumphal procession, and a forest for the chase. In the second act there were the royal apartments of Berenice's temple of vengeance; a spacious court, with a view of the prison, and a covered way, along which passed a train of carriages. In the third act there were, the royal dressing-room, magnificently furnished; stables containing a hundred live horses; a portico adorned with tapestry; and a superb palace seen in perspective. In the course of the piece there were representations of hunting the boar, the stag, and the bear. And to conclude the whole, an enormous globe descended from the sky, which divided itself into lesser globes, suspended in the air, on which were seen allegorical figures of Fame, Honour, Nobility, Virtue, and Glory. We find many descriptions of exhibitions of this kind, chiefly at Venice, but none of them seem to have rivaled the splendour of *Berenice*.

The most curious account that we have met with of one of these exhibitions is given in a note by the English translator of the Abbe Ragueneau's *Parallèle des Italiens et des Français, en ce qui regarde la Musique et les Opéra*, published in 1704. It was the *Intermezzo* (or Interlude) of *Hell*, in the opera of *Nerone Infante*, performed in the Capranica theatre at Rome. "At the sound of a horrid symphony, consisting of horns, great serpents, and regals, part of the floor of the stage opened and discovered a scene underneath, representing several caverns full of infernal spirits, that flew about in a prodigious number, discharging fire and smoke at their mouths and nostrils. At some distance, too, there were seen a great number of damned spirits suffering under their various torments; and on another side was discovered the river Lethe with Charon's boat, on board of which was Mercury, Charon, and the soul of one who had died for love. Upon their landing a prodigious monster appeared, whose mouth opening, to the great horror of the spectators, covered the front wings and the remaining part of the stage. Within his jaws there appeared a throne composed of fire, and a number of monstrous serpents, on which Pluto sat, with a crown of fire on his head, and habited in other royal ornaments of the same nature. The singer who performed this part was one of those deep basses which, in the author's opinion, are so rarely found in Italy. After Cupid had demanded justice of Pluto upon those old women who, in the preceding intermezzo, had cut his wings for making Agrippina, Nero's mother, in love, and several other passages belonging to this intermezzo, the mouth of the monster closed; at which instant Cupid, endeavouring to fly off, was arrested by a little devil, who seized on his foot; upon which Cupid, giving himself a little turn, shot the devil with one of his darts; whereupon the devil was transformed into a curling smoke, that disappeared by degrees, and Cupid escaped. After this the great monster, expanding his wings, began to move very slowly towards the audience; under his body appeared great multitudes of devils, who formed themselves into a ballet, and plunged one after the other into the opening of the floor before mentioned; out of which a prodigious quantity of fire and smoke was discharged. After this, the great monster being got as far as the music-room,\* and while all the spectators were intent upon

\* The orchestra.

\* For specimens of the music of this and other primitive Italian operas, see the Histories of Burney and Hawkins.

what was doing, and began to fear he would come into the pit, he was in an instant transformed into an innumerable multitude of broad white butterflies, which flew all into the pit, and so low that some of them touched the hats of several of the spectators; at which some seemed diverted, and others were not a little terrified, till by degrees they lodged themselves on different parts of the theatre, and at length disappeared. During this circumstance, which sufficiently employed the eyes of the spectators, the stage was refitted, and the scene changed into a beautiful garden, with which the third act began. This representation was so extraordinary in its nature, so exactly performed, and so universally admired and applauded, that great numbers of foreigners came to Rome on purpose to behold it, and confessed, when they had seen it, that it far exceeded the expectations fame had given them of it. And it must be confessed, it gave the spectators a more perfect instructive idea of hell than it is possible for the most artful flowing fancy to delineate. So that the author was not mistaken when he said that these sort of entertainments are *no less instructive* (!) than agreeable."

Towards the end of the seventeenth century a species of entertainment was introduced at Venice, which was for a short time in great vogue. It consisted of little dramas, in which the actors appeared on the stage without speaking. Scrolls descended from the roof upon their heads in succession, in which were written, in large letters, verses of songs, the airs of which were played by the orchestra, while the words were sung by the spectators; the performers on the stage, meanwhile, carrying on the action in dumb show. The spectators found it very amusing to sing, in this manner, the dialogue of the piece, but soon began, doubtless, to think it somewhat childish; for the "scroll pieces" did not long remain in fashion. Sometimes pieces were performed, in which the characters were represented by wooden or wax figures on the stage, while the singers remained invisible behind the scenes. Some of the operas of Pistocchi (one of the most celebrated composers and singers of that day) were performed in this manner.

Our countryman, Evelyn, in his *Diary*, gives some notices of the state of music at Venice in the middle of the seventeenth century. In 1645, he says, "This night, having with my Lord Bruce, taken our places before we went to the opera, where comedies and other plays are represented in recitative music by the most excellent musicians, vocal and instrumental, with variety of scenes painted and contrived with no lesser art of perspective, and machines for flying in the air, and other wonderful motions; taken together it is one of the most magnificent and expensive diversions the wit of man can invent. The history was Hercules in Lydia; the scenes changed thirteen times. The famous voices, Anna Rencia, a Roman, and reputed the best treble of women; but there was an eunuch who in my opinion surpassed her; also a Genoese, that sung an incomparable base. They held us by the eyes and ears till two in the morning." After giving a description of the pastimes during the carnival of 1646, he says, "The comedians have liberty, and the operas are open; witty pasquils are thrown about, and the mountebanks have their stages at every corner. The diversion which chiefly took me up was three noble operas, where were excellent voices and music, the most celebrated of which was the famous Anna Rencia, whom we invited to a fish dinner after four daies in Lent, when they had given over at the theatre. Accompanied with an eunuch whom she brought with her, she entertained us with rare music, both of them singing to a harpsichord. It growing late, a gentleman of Venice came for her to show her the galleries now ready to sayle for Candia. This entertainment produced a second, given us by the English consul of the merchants, inviting us to his house, when he had the Genoese, the most celebrated base in Italy, who was one of the late opera band. This diversion held us so late at night that, conveying a gentlewoman who had supped with us to her gondola at the usual place of landing, we were shot at by two carbines from out another gondola, in which was a noble Venetian and his courtizan unwilling to be disturbed, which made us run and fetch other weapons, not knowing what the matter was, till we were informed of the danger we might run by pursuing it further."

The Italian singers, from the very infancy of the musical drama, attained that superiority over those of other

countries which they have always preserved. Della Valle, who wrote in 1640, commemorates a number of vocal performers, of both sexes, who flourished during his time. "Who," he says, "can hear without rapture Signora Leonora sing to her own accompaniment on the arch lute, which she touches in so fanciful and masterly a manner? And who will venture to say which is the better performer, she or her sister Caterina? Nor is there any one who, like me, has seen and heard Signora Adriana, their mother, when, in her youth, she sailed in a felucca, near the Pausilippan grotto, with her golden harp in her hand, but must confess that in our times these shores have been inhabited by sirens who are not only beautiful and tuneful, but good and virtuous." Among other eminent female singers of that day he mentions Francesca Caccini, the daughter of the composer Giulio Caccini, who had been for many years the admiration of Florence, not only for her talents in singing and composition, but for her Latin and Italian poetry. Not less famous was Caterina Martinelli, who died at the age of eighteen, to the general regret of Italy. A splendid monument to her memory was erected by the Duke of Mantua, in the church of the Carmelites in that city, with the fine inscription, "Nomen mundo, Deo vivat anima." Among the principal male singers were Pistocchi, already mentioned, and Francesco Grossi, called *Syface*, from his excellent performance of the character of Syphax. This singer was killed, when on a journey, in a quarrel with his postilion.

Leonora Baroni, of Mantua, was the most celebrated singer of that period. She is not only spoken of in the above enthusiastic language by Della Valle, but is described by Bayle, in his dictionary, as having been one of the finest singers in the world. A whole volume of poems was published in her praise with this title, "Applausi poetici alle glorie della Signora Leonora Baroni;" and, among the Latin poems of Milton, there are no fewer than three, entitled "Ad Leonoram Romæ canentem." Milton frequented the musical entertainments of the Cardinal Barberini; and it was there, no doubt, that he heard this lady sing. The following fine eulogy on Leonora Baroni is contained in a discourse on the music of the Italians, written by Mr. Maugars, (an ecclesiastic, and a musician of extraordinary attainments,) and quoted by Bayle, under the article *Baroni*. "Leonora Baroni is endowed with fine parts; she understands music perfectly well, and even composes, which makes her mistress of what she sings, and gives her the most exact pronunciation, and just expression of the sense of her words. She does not pretend to beauty, neither is she disagreeable, or a coquette. She sings with a bold and generous modesty, and an agreeable gravity; her voice reaches a large compass of notes, and is true, full, and harmonious; she softens and raises it without straining or making grimaces. Her raptures and sighs are free from wantonness; her looks have nothing impudent, nor does she, in her gestures, overstep a virgin modesty. In passing from one key to another she shows sometimes the divisions of the enharmonic and chromatic kind with so much art and sweetness, that everybody is ravished with that fine and difficult method of singing. She has no need of any person to assist her with a theorbo, or viol, one of which is necessary to make her singing complete, for she herself plays perfectly well on both those instruments. In short, I have had the good fortune to hear her several times sing above thirty different airs, with second and third stanzas composed by herself. I must not forget to tell you, that one day she did me the particular favour to sing with her mother and sister. Her mother played upon the lute, her sister upon the harp, and herself upon the theorbo.\* This concert, composed of three fine voices, and of three different instruments, so powerfully transported my senses, and threw me into such raptures, that I forgot that I was mortal, and thought myself already among the angels, enjoying the felicity of the blessed."

\* The lute and the theorbo are now obsolete instruments. The lute resembled the modern guitar, and was played upon in the same way: but was larger and much more sonorous. The theorbo was in the form of a large lute, from which it differed in having eight bass or thick strings, twice as long as those of the lute. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the lute was the favourite chamber instrument throughout Europe; and in the beginning of dramatic music the recitatives were

## CHAPTER II.

The musical drama in France—Mysteries—Queen of Navarre—Italian opera brought into France—Italian companies in Paris—Isabella Andreini—Lulli—Opera ballets—Quinault—Fontenelle—La Fontaine—Lulli's music—French singers—French musical drama till the time of Rameau.

In France, as in Italy, the regular musical drama was preceded by mysteries, masques, and other exhibitions, performed in the churches on solemn religious festivals, or in the palaces of princes, for the amusement of their visitors and guests. Many of these are described by French writers; but they are so similar to those which have been already mentioned as prevailing in Italy, that it is unnecessary to enter into any details respecting them. Music generally made a part of them, as well as action, machinery, and dancing. Fontenelle, in his *Histoire du Théâtre Français*, gives a particular account of the mystery of *The Passion*, written by the Bishop of Angers, about the middle of the fifteenth century. "This piece," he says, "was a kind of *opera*; for, after the baptism of our Saviour, God the Father speaks; and it is recommended that his words should be pronounced very audibly and distinctly, and at once, with three voices, treble, counter-tenor, and bass, all well in tune, and that the whole scene should be sung in harmony." In a sacred drama, performed on a high festival of the church, and listened to with reverence by a devout assembly, words, supposed to be uttered by the Supreme Being, might be delivered without indecorum; and this manner of harmonising them for a plurality of voices indicated much grandeur of conception on the part of the musician. Every musical tone is a harmonious combination of simple sounds; and, by further making the divine voice a harmonious combination of musical tones, an effect of superhuman majesty and beauty would be imparted to it. To produce this impression, it must have been necessary to lay aside all the contrivances of figure and imitation, and to make the harmony consist of plain counterpoint, every syllable being uttered by all the voices at once.\*

The celebrated Marguerite de Valois, queen of Navarre, composed mysteries and moralities, which were represented by the ladies of her court. Several of her dramatic pieces are contained in the collection of her works, published in 1547, under the punning title of *Marguerites de la Marguerite des Princesses, tres-illustre Regne de Navarre*. They consist of four mysteries, a comedy, and a farce. "As to the mysteries," says a French critic, "if they contain ridiculous things, it is the fault of the age and the species of composition. The mysteries were the tragedies of those days. The Italians had not yet taught us to compose dramas of a more regular and interesting kind. The ancient Greek tragedies were not yet translated; and in this infancy of our theatre, there were none of these pieces in which we find more talent, delicacy, and nature, than in those of this princess. They are of moderate length, and are not loaded with the multiplicity of characters usual in the mysteries of the preceding age. The four pieces, *The Nativity*, *The Adoration of the Kings*, *The Masacre of the Innocents*, and *The Flight into Egypt*, are connected with each other, and the action of each piece may be supposed to have taken place within twenty-four hours, the time prescribed by the law of the unities. If it were still the custom to perform pieces of this kind, we could not do better than translate into modern French the mysteries of the queen of Navarre."

The French writers admit that they owe the establishment of the opera to the Italians. Rinuccini, who went

accompanied by the theorbo (also called the arch-lute) before the harpsichord was used for that purpose. Indeed, the theorbo, from the length of its strings, produced such soft and sustained tones, that it was preferred by many to the harpsichord as an accompaniment. There was a theorbo in the orchestra of our Italian opera till the end of Handel's management.

\* This expedient has been used by the Chevalier Neukomm, in his oratorio of *Mount Sinai*, in which the commandments are delivered from the holy mountain, in *canto fermo* of four choral parts, accompanied by trombones, all in plain counterpoint. The effect is grand and awful.

to France in the suite of Mary of Medicis, on her marriage with Henry IV. first introduced Italian music into that country. The first Italian company of performers appeared in Paris, in 1577. They attracted such multitudes, (says an old writer,) that the four best preachers in Paris had not such numerous assemblies when they preached. The ecclesiastics made loud complaints; and in a few weeks the parliament ordered the theatre to be closed. The company obtained letters-patent from the king, authorising their establishment; but the parliament refused to ratify these letters. By an express order of the king, however, they resumed their performances; but the troubles of the kingdom obliged them to leave it and return to Italy. When Henry IV. returned from his expedition to Savoy, he brought another Italian company, who remained at Paris only for two years. Their principal actress was Isabella Andreini, a member of the academy of the Intenti at Florence. This lady was no less remarkable for her virtue and her literary attainments, than for her talents on the stage. Her manners and conversation gave additional charms to her beauty; and the regret caused by her departure from France is commemorated by the verses of several of the poets of that day.

Another Italian company was brought to Paris, by Cardinal Mazarin, during the minority of Louis XIV. in the year 1645. The first opera which they performed was *La Finta Pazzo*, an opera by Giulio Strozzi. But Italian operas seem to have been little encouraged at that time. French pieces called *ballets*, though they appear to have had words, as well as dancing and music, were the favourite amusement of the court; and it was in composing the music of these pieces, that Lulli first brought his talents into notice.

This celebrated musician, the son of a Tuscan peasant, was born in 1633. Having shown a disposition for music, he received some instructions in the rudiments of the art, from a priest. The Chevalier de Guise, when on his travels in Italy, had been requested by Mademoiselle de Montpensier, a niece of Louis XIV. to procure for her a handsome Italian boy, as a page; and, happening to see young Lulli, at Florence, he chose him for that purpose, on account of his wit and vivacity, and his skill in playing on the guitar. The lady, however, not liking his appearance, for he was far from handsome, sent him into her kitchen, where he was made a *sous-marmite*, or under-sculion. At this time he was ten years old.

In his leisure hours, he used to be constantly scraping on a wretched violin which he had contrived to pick up; and some person of taste, who happened to hear him, having told the princess that he had a great talent for music, she had him regularly taught to play upon the violin. He was soon admitted into the king's band, and so much distinguished himself as a musician, that he was placed at its head, and employed to compose the music of the court ballets, in which the king and other great personages used to dance. One of these pieces was *Aleciandere*, performed in 1658, in which his majesty himself was one of the dancers. The performance not being ready to begin at the proper time, the king sent message after message to Lulli, to tell him to make haste. At last he sent to say he was weary of waiting, and desired that the piece should begin immediately. The messenger told Lulli that the king was out of all patience and in a violent passion: but the musician, wholly intent on his preparations, said coolly, "His majesty can wait." The king laughed at the answer, and quietly waited till Lulli was ready. The composer preserved during his life this plain and blunt humour, and used a freedom of speech which frequently annoyed the courtiers, but never seems to have offended the king himself, whose favour for Lulli was uninterrupted.

In 1660, the celebrated Pierre Corneille produced his tragedy of *Andromeda*, a sort of opera, containing splendid machinery, dancing, and music. It was performed before the court, and received with great applause. Pegasus was represented by a real horse, a thing which had never before been seen on the stage in France. A singular method was taken to make the horse exhibit the proper degree of martial ardour. He was subjected to a severe fast, and, when he was brought upon the stage, a man, placed opposite to him, out of sight of the audience, was winnowing oats. The hungry animal neighed, pawed the ground, curvetted, and acted his part with

such "good discretion," that he contributed greatly to the success of the piece.

These opera-ballets continued to be the entertainment of the court for a few years longer, till the regular French opera derived its being from the celebrated Quinault.

Philip Quinault was born at Paris in 1636; but we have no account of his family. His genius for poetry displayed itself at an early age; and, before he was twenty years old, he had written several comedies, which were performed with success. His friends, however, having wisely advised him not to trust to poetry for a livelihood, he placed himself under an eminent advocate, and made himself capable, in a few years, of exercising that profession. One day this advocate desired him to conduct one of his clients, a gentleman of some consequence, to the house of the judge who was to report to the court, according to the French mode of procedure, the merits of a cause in which he was engaged. The judge not being at home, and not being expected till late, Quinault proposed to the gentleman to go to the theatre and see a new comedy, promising to get him a good place. The play that evening was a new piece of Quinault's, called *L'Amant Indiscret*. No sooner did the young author appear in the theatre, than he was surrounded by people of the highest quality, who congratulated him on the merit of his comedy, which, they said, they had come to see for the third or fourth time. The gentleman was surprised; still more so when he saw an excellent comedy performed amidst the applause of the pit and boxes; and most of all, when, having returned to the judge, he heard Quinault explain the points of his case with the utmost clearness, and support his cause by such solid reasons, that the difficulties started by the judge were entirely removed.

He continued, for many years, to produce a series of dramatic pieces, chiefly tragedies, which were well received by the public; but some of them were severely attacked by the critics, especially Boileau, who, for some unexplained reason, seems to have taken a violent dislike to him; for, though Quinault's pieces were sufficiently open to criticism in various respects, yet Boileau's abuse of them was immoderate and indiscriminate. Boileau was much censured, even in his own time, for this conduct; and it is now universally admitted that he did Quinault great injustice. His famous couplet,

"Si je pense exprimer un auteur sans défaut,  
La raison dit Virgile, et la rime Quinault;"

as well as his

"L'or de Virgile, et le clinquant du Tasse,"

are quoted now only as instances of the sacrifice of truth to point and antithesis.

It was not, however, till Quinault became associated with Lulli in the composition of operas that he produced those pieces which have rendered his name illustrious. The first of their joint productions was *Les Fêtes de l'Amour et de Bacchus*, performed in 1672. This was a mere pastoral ballet. But their first regular opera, *Cadmus et Hermione*, was performed in the public theatre of the Palais Royal in April, 1673, having been previously represented with great success in the private court theatre. In this piece he introduced some burlesque scenes, which were considered unsuitable to the style of the lyrical drama; it then being, in France, appropriated entirely to mythological and heroic subjects. He was accused of having imitated the Italians, who mixed buffoonery with their most serious subjects; a poor resource, said the critics, which was worse than even monotony and baldness. Quinault, influenced by these strictures, did not admit any comic characters or incidents into his subsequent operas.

Lulli, finding that Quinault had so great a talent for lyrical poetry, proposed that they should enter into an engagement, that Quinault should write an opera every year, for which Lulli should pay him four thousand livres. This engagement was accordingly entered into; and the music (we believe) of all Quinault's operas was composed by Lulli.

Quinault, notwithstanding his reputation as a poet, did not abandon the profession of the law. He married the rich widow of a merchant, and afterwards purchased the office of an auditor of the chamber of accounts, the duties of which he performed till his death. He died on 29th November, 1698. It is said that, during his

last illness, he was extremely penitent, on account of the voluptuous tendency of various parts of his writings.

During the lifetime of Lulli and Quinault, the music of the one was the best that had ever been heard in France, while the other appeared in an age of great dramatic writers. It is well observed by La Harpe, that Quinault's great mistake and misfortune were the calling his pieces musical tragedies instead of operas. Had it not been for this, he would not have been looked upon as an unsuccessful rival of Racine, or have offended classical critics with the little resemblance those pieces had to the dramas of the ancients, or the regular tragedies of the moderns. But the reputation of Lulli has fallen in proportion as that of Quinault has risen. Voltaire, in his *Siècle de Louis Quatorze*, first published in 1749, said: "Quinault was celebrated for his beautiful lyric poetry, and the gentleness with which he opposed the unjust satires of Boileau. His poetry was greatly superior to the music of Lulli. It will always be read; and Lulli, except in a few of his recitatives, can no longer be borne. However, it was long believed that Quinault entirely owed his favour to Lulli. Time appreciates all things."

Quinault's dramatic works are well known to the readers of French poetry. All his lyrical dramas are full of beauties; but *Atys*, *Phaeton*, *Isis*, and *Armide*, have been considered as the best. *Atys*, which was produced in 1676, was the finest opera that had yet appeared, and had an astonishing success. On the day of its first performance, the doors were forced, at ten o'clock in the morning, by persons who wished to secure places, and, before mid-day, the theatre was completely crowded. It did not disappoint the expectations of the public; though it affords several specimens of that "morale lubrique" so justly censured by Boileau; as in these lines of a duet,

"Il faut souvent, pour être heureux,  
Qu'il en coûte un peu d'innocence."

The king having asked Madame de Maintenon which was her favourite opera, she said it was *Atys*. "Ah," said the gallant monarch, "Atys is a happy man." It was at a performance of this opera that Boileau said to the boxkeeper, "Put me in a place where I shall not be able to hear the words; I like Lulli's music very much, but have a sovereign contempt for Quinault's verses. Notwithstanding the dislike of the Aristarchus of the age, however, *Atys* continued to please the public, and for a long time kept possession of the theatre.

*Armide* was produced in 1686, and was the last of Quinault's works. It is said that Lulli insisted on his writing the last act five times over; and that for this reason he conceived a dislike to writing for the stage. Others ascribe to devotion his resolution to abandon dramatic composition. This opera was at first coldly received, the music not having pleased so much as usual. Lulli, who was so passionately fond of his own compositions, that (as he himself confessed) he would have killed any one who said they were bad, had it performed for his own gratification, he himself forming the whole audience. This odd circumstance having been reported to the king, he thought that the opera could not be bad if Lulli himself had so good an opinion of it. Having, therefore, ordered it to be performed before him, he was charmed with it; and then both the court and the public changed their opinion of its merits. Nothing can be finer than the subject of this opera, affording, as it does, ample scope for impassioned poetry, striking situations, and the accessories of beautiful scenery and stage decorations. On this account it has often been chosen by dramatists, but none of them appear to have treated it so happily as Quinault. The last scene in the second act, consisting of the soliloquy of Armida, when she is about to stab Rinaldo in his sleep, and is prevented by the sudden influence of a passion of which she is as yet unconscious, is exquisitely beautiful. The fourth act is comparatively feeble; but the fifth (which, unlike the operas of the present day) is terminated by a soliloquy of the heroine, is full of magnificent poetry. It was by this noble production that Quinault terminated his brilliant career; and he had the uncommon felicity of making his last work his masterpiece. *Armide* was afterwards

\* "Et tous ces lieux communs de morale lubrique,  
Que Lulli rechauffa des sons de sa musique."



reset by Rameau; and, more recently, by Gluck, with whose music it is still performed in France and Germany.

During the time that Lulli was employed in composing the music of Quinault's operas, he appears to have set only two others, *Psyche* and *Bellerophon*, both by Fontenelle, the first of which was performed in 1678, and the second in 1679. They are both to be found in the works of that author. *Psyche* is an elegant poem, in which the rise and progress of the tender passion, in a young and innocent heart, are represented with much sweetness and delicacy. It is remarkable that the scene in which the impending fate of *Psyche* (condemned by the oracle to be sacrificed in order to stop the ravages of a monstrous serpent) is lamented by her rustic companions, is written in Italian—"Deh, piangete al pianto mio"—and sung by two women and a man. *Bellerophon* was performed in 1679, and was meant as a compliment to Louis XIV. on his having given peace to Europe. Lulli's last opera was *Acis et Galatée*, written by a forgotten poet of the name of Campistron.\* It was performed in 1687.

Lulli, in the course of his musical career, had become so great a favourite of the king, that his majesty had granted him letters of nobility: a sort of distinction somewhat similar to that of being knighted in England. Somebody, by way of mortifying Lulli, told him that it was lucky for him that the king had exempted him from the necessity of obtaining his nobility in the common way, by having first been appointed one of his majesty's secretaries—an appointment which he could not have got, as the king's secretaries would not have received him into their body. Lulli was piqued at this, but said nothing for some time. In 1681, Moliere's *Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, containing a burlesque Turkish interlude, with music composed by Lulli, was performed before the court at St. Germain. Lulli himself played the part of the Mufti, which he acted and sang to the admiration and delight of the audience. The king, who had been excessively amused, paid Lulli many compliments on his performance. Lulli seized the opportunity: "Please your majesty," he said, "I have been anxious for the honour of being one of your secretaries, but I understand they would not receive me." "Not receive you?" said Louis, "upon my word it would be doing them a great deal of honour. Go and talk to the chancellor about it." Lulli went immediately to M. le Tellier; and the report spread that the musician was going to be made a royal secretary. There was a great commotion, and loud complaints among the people in office that a player and buffoon should be admitted into their honourable fraternity. Even M. Louvois, the minister, taxed Lulli with his impudence, which, he said, by no means became a man who had no other recommendation but that of making people laugh. "Why, what the devil," cried Lulli, "you would do as much, if you were able!" The king's will, however, was expressed in a way which silenced all opposition, and Lulli got the appointment. On the day of his reception, he gave a grand dinner to the official gentlemen whom he had joined. In the evening his guests went to the theatre, when his *Triomphe de l'Amour* was performed, and it was amusing to see, seated on the benches nearest the stage, two or three rows of grave personages, in black cloaks and big wigs, listening, with serious faces, to the minuets and gavots of their new colleague the musician. M. de Louvois himself soon laid aside his ill-humour; and next time he met Lulli in the midst of a crowd of courtiers at Versailles, he called out to him, laughingly, "Good day, brother!" Lulli, besides being a distinguished artist, was wealthy, and of irreproachable character; and, as the post was one which it was customary to give as a

sinecure, and a mere mark of honour, it is impossible to think that, in his case, it was improperly bestowed.

The king having had a dangerous illness in 1686, Lulli composed a *Te Deum* on his recovery, which was performed in the church of the Feuillans, on the 8th of January, 1687. In beating the time with a cane, he struck his toe so severely that the hurt, probably from a bad habit of body, caused a mortification. In place of having the part amputated, which might have saved him, he listened to the promises of some quacks who undertook to cure him without this expedient; and the Princes de Vendôme, who had a great regard for him, offered them four thousand pistoles if they cured him, and lodged the money in the hands of a banker. But all their attempts were vain; and his case became evidently hopeless. His confessor refused to give him absolution, unless he burned his opera of *Achille et Polixène*, which he was then preparing for the stage. He consented, and the manuscript was committed to the flames. Some days afterwards, when he seemed a little better, one of the young princes came to see him. "What, Baptiste," cried the prince, "have you been such a fool as to burn your opera?"—"Hush, my lord," whispered Lulli, "I have got a copy of it." It is said, however, that in his last moments he showed sincere penitence and a strong sense of religion. He died on the 22d March, 1687, in the 54th year of his age. He was plain in his appearance and rough in his manners, but honest and good-natured. His greatest failing was his fondness for wine and money. He left a fortune of 630,000 livres, an enormous sum in those days. He married the daughter of Michael Lambert, an eminent musician, by whom he had three sons and three daughters, whom he left in possession of sufficient wealth and powerful friends. Two of his sons were also musicians. They composed, in conjunction, the music to the opera of *Zephyr et Flor*, performed in 1688; also, two other operas, called *Orphée et Alcide*.

Between the death of Lulli and the end of the century, several operas were composed by Colasse, a musician of small reputation. One of these was *Thetis et Pelée*, written by Fontenelle, and performed in 1690 with little success. In the year 1750, M. d'Auvergne undertook to compose new music to this opera, and informed Fontenelle of his intention. "You do me a great deal of honour," said the veteran poet, "but it is sixty years since this opera was performed, and nobody told me then that its failure was the fault of the musician." M. d'Auvergne persisted in his design; and the opera, with his new music, was very favourably received. When it was performed, Fontenelle sat in the same box in which he had been at its first representation, sixty years before, after having dined with two friends with whom he had also dined on the day of that first representation. He died in 1757, having reached within a month of a hundred years of age.

Colasse also composed the music of *Astrée*, a tragic opera, written by La Fontaine, and produced in 1691. A characteristic anecdote is related of this celebrated poet. At the first performance of this piece, he was sitting in a box behind some ladies who did not know him. They heard him constantly saying to himself, "wretched! detestable! trash!" until at length one of them, weary of his repeated murmurs, said to him, "O, sir, the piece is by no means bad—the author is a man of genius, the famous M. de la Fontaine."—"Well, ladies," said he, very coolly, "the piece is not worth a farthing, and this M. de la Fontaine whom you talk of is a block-head—he tells you so himself." At the end of the first act he went away, and going into an adjoining coffee-house, sat down in a corner and fell fast asleep. A gentleman of his acquaintance coming in, and seeing him, exclaimed, "What, M. de la Fontaine here! should he not be at the first representation of his opera?"—"I am just come from it," said La Fontaine, rousing himself and yawning. "I sat out the first act, but was so completely sick of it that I could not stay any longer. Really, the Parisians have a wonderful stock of patience!"

About this time was performed an opera ballet, called *Arethusa*, written by Danchet, and composed by Campra, one of Lulli's imitators. It had not much success: and as the author and composer, seeing it likely to fail, were considering how they could support it by rendering it more attractive, "I know but one way," said a friend who heard their conversation,—"you must lengthen the dances and shorten the ladies' petticoats."

Lulli was the only French dramatic composer of any reputation, prior to the end of the seventeenth century. He may properly be called a French dramatic composer; notwithstanding his Italian birth: for, having spent his life in France, from the time he was ten years old, it is impossible to imagine that his taste or style could have been affected by the fleeting musical impressions he had received in his childhood. Voltaire, who wrote with equal confidence, if not with equal knowledge, upon all subjects, has some criticisms on Lulli's music, which may be considered not so much his own opinions as those which he was accustomed to hear. "It may be observed," he says, "that when Lulli, the true father of French music, came into France, the dramatic music of Italy was of the same grave, noble, and simple kind as that which we still admire in the recitatives of Lulli. And nothing can more resemble these recitatives than Luigi's famous motet, composed and universally admired in Italy about the same time; *Sunt breves mundi rosz*. However, the poetry of Quinault animated the music, more than the music of Lulli animated the words. The genius of two such men, with great acting, was necessary to form such an exhibition, in some parts of *Alys*, *Armide*, and *Roland*, as neither antiquity nor any contemporary people ever knew. The airs are not equal to the recitatives of these great scenes. They are short simple tunes, more in the style of our Noël (Christmas Carols) and Venetian ballads, than opera songs. But such was the taste of the times. And the more artless the music, the more easily it was remembered." These remarks set out with the evident absurdity that Lulli had formed his style of French recitative on the dramatic music of Italy when he left that country at ten years old. Voltaire finds a resemblance between Lulli's recitatives and a motet of an Italian composer of that day: but the motet was a hymn, or anthem, for the church, in harmony of many parts, and had no sort of affinity to dramatic music. It is true that Lulli's recitative, which is a sort of drawling psalmody, tolerable to no ears but those of Frenchmen, may have some resemblance to church music; but it certainly is as unlike as possible to the speaking recitative of Cavalli or Cesti. As to Lulli's airs, so much undervalued in comparison with his recitatives, any musician of the present day, who makes this comparison, will form an opposite opinion. They are short and simple, but we have found some of them exceedingly smooth, flowing, natural, and more agreeable to modern taste than the airs of Rameau, the idol of the French at the time when Voltaire wrote these strictures.

Lulli contributed greatly to the improvement of instrumental music. He appears to have been the inventor of the overture to dramatic pieces, and was so successful in this species of composition, that even Handel, in his opera-overtures, took him for his model. He also increased the power of the orchestra by making use of kettle-drums and side-drums in the accompaniments of his choruses.

Our opinion of Lulli's genius must be enhanced by considering the wretched state of vocal and instrumental performance in his time. When he was placed at the head of the king's band, they could play nothing but what they had learned by heart; and it must have been by great exertion that he made them capable of executing the overtures and accompaniments of his operas. His vocal performers were equally unformed and ignorant; and he not only taught them to sing and to act, but was even obliged to give lessons to the dancers. He was the only instructor of the celebrated La Rochois, who was the *prima donna* in most of its pieces; and his other singers must have been equally ignorant, as they could have received no previous education in an art which he may be said, in so far as regards France, to have called into existence.

Among the singers of that period, who are mentioned by French writers, there are none whose names are worthy of being preserved on account of their talents. One of them, however, La Maupin, the successor of La Rochois, may be noticed on account of her wild and lawless character, and the strangeness of her adventures. She was born in 1673, and married at a very early age, but soon ran away with a fencing-master, from whom she learned the use of the small sword. After remaining for some time at Marseilles, where she narrowly escaped the punishment of being burnt alive for setting fire to a convent, she went to Paris, appeared on the opera stage at the age of two-and-twenty, and was for a con-

\* Campistron wrote an opera called *Achille et Polixène*, which was set to music by Colasse, and performed in 1688. Its failure produced the following pungent epigram:—

"Entre Campistron et Colasse  
Grand déhant au Parnasse,  
Sur ce l'opéra n'a pas un sort heureux;  
De son mauvais succès nul ne se croit coupable,  
L'un dit que la musique est plate et misérable,  
L'autre, que la conduite et les vers sont affreux;  
Mais lo grand Apollon, toujours juge équitable,  
Trouve qu'ils ont raison tous deux."

siderable time the reigning favourite of the day. Having on some occasion been affronted by Dumeni, a singer, she put on male attire, watched for him in the Place des Victoires, insisted on his drawing his sword and fighting her, and, on his refusing, caned him and took his watch and snuff-box. Next day, Dumeni having boasted in the opera-house that he had defended himself against three men who had attempted to rob him, she told the whole story, and produced his watch and snuff-box in proof of her having chastised him as a coward. Thevenard, another singer of note, was nearly treated in the same manner, and had no other way of escaping, but by publicly begging her pardon, after hiding himself in the Palais Royal for three weeks. At a ball given by Monsieur, the brother of Louis XIV., she appeared in men's clothes, and, having behaved impertinently to a lady, was called out by three of her friends. Instead of avoiding the combat, by discovering her sex, she drew her sword and killed all the three; and then, returning very coolly to the ball-room, told the story to Monsieur, who obtained her pardon. After some other adventures, she went to Brussels, where she became mistress of the Elector of Bavaria. This prince, having quitted her for the countess of Arcos, sent her by that lady's husband a purse of 40,000 livres, with an order to quit Brussels. But this singular heroine threw the purse at the count's head, telling him it was a recompense worthy of such a contemptible scoundrel as himself. She afterwards returned to the Parisian stage, which she left in 1705. The conclusion of such a life is not the least extraordinary part of it. She became at last very devout; and, having recalled her husband, from whom she had been long separated, lived with him in a pious manner till her death, in 1707, at the age of thirty-four. Such is the history of this woman, given by Laborde and other writers; and, strange as it is, there seems no reason for doubting its truth.

Addison gives a lively description of the French opera at the beginning of the eighteenth century. "The music of the French," he says, "is indeed very properly adapted to their pronunciation and accent, as their whole opera wonderfully favours the genius of such a gay airy people. The chorus in which that opera abounds, gives the parterre frequent opportunities of joining in concert with the stage. This inclination of the audience to sing along with the actors, so prevails with them, that I have sometimes known the performer on the stage do no more, in a celebrated song, than the clerk of a parish church, who serves only to raise the psalm, and is afterwards drowned in the music of the congregation. Every actor that comes on the stage is a beau. The queens and heroines are so painted that they appear as ruddy and cherry-checked as milkmaids. The shepherds are all embroidered, and acquit themselves in a ball better than our English dancing-masters. I have seen a couple of rivers appear in red stockings; and *Alpheus*, instead of having his head covered with sedge and bulrushes, making love in a fair full-bottomed perwig and a plume of feathers; but with a voice so full of shakes and quavers, that I should have thought the murmurs of a country brook the much more agreeable music. I remember the last opera I saw in that merry nation was the rape of *Proserpine*, where *Pluto*, to make the more tempting figure, puts himself in a French equipage, and brings *Ascalaphus* along with him as his *valet de chambre*. This is what we call folly and impertinence; but what the French look upon as gay and polite."

The French musical drama continued in the state which has now been described till nearly the middle of the last century. The stage was supplied with the productions of Lulli, and his imitators, Colasse, Campra, Destouches, and others; till a new era was created by the appearance of the operas of Rameau.

### CHAPTER III.

The musical drama in England—Music in old English plays—Masques in the reigns of Henry VIII. and Queen Elizabeth—Plays performed by the singing-boys of the churches—Masques by the gentlemen of the Inns of Court—Ben Jonson's Masques for the court of James I.—Manners of that court—Alfonso Ferabosco—Nicolo Lanieri.

The modern drama, in England, as in other countries, may be traced to the Mysteries, or spiritual representa-

\* Spectator, No. 29.

tions, of the middle ages. The history of these pastimes of our forefathers, in which they combined devotion with amusement, is exceedingly curious and interesting, and has occupied the pens of many eminent writers: but the most comprehensive and entertaining account which has been given of them, is contained in Mr. Collier's valuable *History of the English Theatre*. Mr. Collier objects to the appellation *Mysteries*, as applied to these old English religious shows, on the ground that it was not given to them in their own times; and he, therefore, substitutes the term *Miracle Plays*. But we are not convinced of the necessity of disusing a name which they have long received, in common with those of Italy, France, Germany, Spain, and by every writer who has had occasion to speak of them.

Music, which was always a part of those ancient exhibitions, continued to be introduced into the more regular dramas which succeeded them. Down to the seventeenth century, and including a considerable portion of it, there are few of our tragedies and comedies in which there is not vocal or instrumental music. In *Gammer Gurton's Needle*, the first English regular comedy, written in the year 1551, there is a song (the well-known Bacchanalian ditty, "I cannot eat but little meat,") and an instance of the use of music between the acts; for, at the end of the second act, one of the characters, leaving the stage, says to the musicians,

"Into the town will I, my friends to visit there,  
And hither straight again to see th' end of this gere.  
In the meantime, fellows, pype up your fiddles.

I say, take them,  
And let your friendes hear such mirth as ye can make them."

In the tragedy of *Gorboduc*, or *Ferrex and Porrex*, written by Lord Buckhurst, in 1561, there are directions for exhibitions of dumb-show before each act; the first being accompanied by the music of violins, the second by the music of cornets, the third by the music of flutes, the fourth by the music of hautboys, and the last by drums and fifes.

In addition to the above, Dr. Burney mentions the tragic-comedy of *King Cambyses*, in which music was performed at a banquet, and the tragedy of *Jocasta*, in which each act was concluded by a chorus, (though it is by no means clear that these choruses were sung,) as instances of the introduction of music in old English plays. But he has overlooked a much more remarkable instance, namely, the comedy of *Damon and Pythias*, by Richard Edwards. This may almost be called a musical drama, in the modern sense of the phrase. The author was not only a poet, but a musician; and, in the beginning of Queen Elizabeth's reign, was appointed one of the gentlemen, and master of the children, of the chapel royal. The play is really amusing, from its rudeness of construction, ludicrous absurdities, and the exceeding homeliness of the language in which all the characters express themselves. The scene, of course, lies at the court of Dionysius, the tyrant of Syracuse, where Damon and Pythias, two Grecian gentlemen, make their appearance, with each a servant, Will, and Jack. There is Snap, a tipstaff; Gronno, the hangman; and a sort of clown, called Grimme. Carisophus, a parasite, accuses Damon to the tyrant; and, by way of completing the happy denouement, receives poetical justice by being kicked off the stage by the king's privy councillor. The famous debate before the tyrant, in which each of the friends contends that he ought to die for the other, is conducted after this fashion:

"Pythias. Let me have no wronge, as now standes the case,

Damon ought not to die, but Pythias:  
By misadventure, not by his wyll, his houre is past;  
therefore I,  
Because he came not at his just time, ought justly to die:  
So was my promise, so was thy promise, O kynge;  
All this courte can bear witness of the thinge.

Damon. Not so, O mightie kynge, to justice it is contrarie,  
That for another man's fault the innocent should die:  
Ne yet is my time playnly expired, it is not fully noone  
Of this my day appointed, by all the clockes in the towne.

Pythias. Believe no clocke, the houre is past by the sonne."

Damon closes the debate, by addressing the hangman;—

"Come, Gronno, do thine office now; why is thy colour so dead?

My neck is so short, thou wyll never have honestie in striking off this head."

*Honestie* here means honour, or credit. The author borrowed this speech from Hall's account of Sir Thomas More's execution. "Also the hangman kneeled down to him, asking him forgiveness of his death, (as the manner is,) to whom he said, I forgive thee, but I promise thee thou shalt never have honestie of the stryking off my head, my neck is so short."

This hangman is a merry fellow, and, like Scott's *Petit André*, very kind to his patients.

"Dionysius. Gronno, despoyle hym, and eke dispatch him quickly.

Gronno. It shall be done: since you came into this place,

I might have stricken off seven heads in this space.  
By'r lady, here are good garments; these are myne by the roode,

It is an evyll winde that bloweth no man good.  
Now, Pythias, kneele down, ask me blessing like a pretty boy,  
And, with a trice, thy head from thy shoulders I will convey."

In this piece,\* unlike any other plays of such antiquity, the actors are also singers. When Damon is carried to prison, his friend laments his fate in the following scene.

"Pythias. Ah! wofull Pythias! sithe now I am alone

What way shall I first begin to make my mone?  
What words shall I finde apt for my complaynte?  
Damon, my friend, my joy, my life is in peril, of force I must now faint.

But, oh musick! as in joyful tunes thy merry notes I did borrow,  
So now lend mee thy yernful tunes, to utter my sorrow.

Here Pythias sings, and the regaller† play

Awake, ye wofull wightes,  
That long have wept in woe:  
Resign to me your plaintes and teares,  
My haplesse hap to show.  
My woe no tongue can tell,  
Ne pen can well descrie:  
O what a death is this to heare!  
Damon my friend must die.

The loss of worldly wealth  
Manne's wisdom may restore,  
And physike hath provided, too,  
A salve for every sore:  
But my true friend once lost  
No arte can well supplie;  
Then, what a death is this to heare!  
Damon my friend must die.

My mouthe refuse the foode  
That should my limbe sustayne!  
Let sorrow sinke into my brest,  
And ransacke every veine:  
You furies all at once  
On me your torments trie:  
Why should I live, since that I heare  
Damon my friend must die!

Gripe me, ye greedy griefs,  
And present plagues of death;

\* Among other pieces of pedantry, the characters are much given to quoting Latin: and, in one place, Jack addresses Grimme, in French, "*Je bois à vous, mon compaignon*;" to which Grimme replies, "*J'ai vous pleigé, petit Zazene*." The annotator of the second edition of Dodsley's *Old Plays*, says, "I know not what is meant by *Zazene*." The meaning is quite plain; Grimme calls Jack "*petit Jean*."

† The regals was an instrument in common use in England, in the sixteenth century. It seems to have been a small organ, though its nature and powers are not distinctly known. Altieri, in his Italian and English dictionary, says, "*Regale*, sorta di stromento simile all'argano, ma minore."

You sisters three, with cruel hands,  
With speed come stop my breath :  
Shrine me in clay alive,  
Some good man stop mine eye ;  
O death, come now, seeing I hear  
Damon my friend must die."

When Pythias, as Damon's hostage, is carried to prison, "the regelles play a mourning song." When, on Damon's failure to return at the appointed time, his friend is about to suffer death, Eubulos, the benevolent councillor, enters and sings a song of lamentation for his fate, each stanza of which has a burden sung by "the Muses," in chorus; though we are not informed how the Muses came there. There is also a comic trio, sung by Jacke, Wille, and Grimme; and the whole concludes with a regular *finale*, or song in honour of the queen, before whom the play was performed by the children of her chapel,) ending thus;

"Long may she governe in honour and wealth,  
Voyde of all sicknesse, in most perfect health ;  
Which health to prolonge, as true friends require,  
God graunt she may have her own hearte's desire ;  
Which friends will defend with most stedfast faith,  
The Lord graunt her such friends, most noble queene  
Elizabeth."

The author of this play was, no doubt, also the composer of the music. He died, according to Sir John Hawkins, on the 31st of October, 1566.

Shakspeare, who was evidently a passionate lover of music, has introduced it in a number of his plays. *The Tempest*, even in its original form, may almost be considered a musical drama. Besides "Come unto these yellow sands," "Full fathom five thy father lies," "Where the bee sucks," and other songs, it contains a Masque with music, presented by the spirits of the enchanted island. The same is the case with *As you like it*, in which there are the fine sylvan glees, "Under the green-wood tree," "What shall he have that kill'd the deer," and "It was a lover and his lass;" the exquisite song, "Blow, blow thou winter wind; and the music in the last scene. Many of his other plays contain beautiful lyrical pieces; and the passages descriptive of the charms of music, and its effects, are innumerable. This admixture of music is to be found in the plays of Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, Shirley, Dryden, and other dramatists of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and did not cease till the musical drama acquired a separate and independent existence. The masques, which became the favourite amusements of the court in the sixteenth century, were the precursors of the opera in England; and (in the words of Burney) belong to the chain of dramas which completed the union of poetry and music on our stage. It was by a gradual progress that the masque ripened into the musical drama; and there are several steps between the pageants exhibited before Henry the Eighth and Queen Elizabeth, (and in which these sovereigns themselves were frequently actors,) and the *Comus* of Milton.

The masque held a principle place among the polite amusements of the reign of Henry VIII. It was composed chiefly of music, dancing, and a display of grotesque characters like a modern masquerade. One of these shows, in 1530, may be mentioned as a specimen. It was contrived by the king, to surprise Cardinal Wolsey, while he was giving a splendid banquet, at his palace of Whitehall; and Shakspeare has introduced it into his play of Henry VIII. The account given of it by Holingshead, the old chronicler, from whom Shakspeare borrowed his incidents, is, that at night, the king, in a mask, and attended by twelve other maskers in strange dresses, privately landed at Whitehall stairs. On their landing, several small pieces of cannon were fired. The cardinal, who was presiding at his banquet, in the midst of a splendid company, was, (or affected to be—for there was probably some collusion in the case,) alarmed at this unusual noise, and desired Lord Sandys, who was one of the guests, to see what was the matter. Lord Sandys returned, and said that thirteen foreign noblemen of distinction were just arrived, having been attracted by the report of the cardinal's banquet, and of the beautiful ladies who graced it. The cardinal ordered them to be ushered into the banqueting room, to which they were conducted, attended by torch-bearers, and to the music of drums and fifes. After having received

refreshments, they requested permission to dance with the ladies, whom they kissed, and to play with them at mumm-chance, (a game at hazard,) producing at the same time a great golden cup filled with crowns. Having played for some time with the ladies, they designedly lost all that remained in the cup to the cardinal, who began to hint his suspicions as to the real quality of one of his guests. On this, one of the maskers said, "If your grace can point him out, he will readily discover himself."

The cardinal pointed, by real or feigned mistake, to Sir Edward Nevil; at which the king laughed; and pulling off his own mask, and Sir Edward's, convinced the cardinal that he had guessed wrong. The king and his companions then retired to another apartment to change their attire; and in the mean time a fresh banquet of the most magnificent kind was served up, to which the king sat down with the rest of the company. The royal joke, of course, was the occasion of much mirth and jesting; and the night was spent in dancing, dice playing, and other amusements. Shakspeare makes this entertainment the occasion on which Henry first saw and was smitten with the charms of the unfortunate Ann Boleyn. Another masque of the same period has something like the representation of an action. In the hall of the palace at Greenwich, a castle was reared, with two towers, gates, and battlements; and on the front was inscribed, *Le fortresse dangereuse*. From the windows, looked out six ladies, clothed in russet satin, "laid all over with leaves of gold, and every one knit with laces of blew silk and gold, on their heads coifs and caps all of golde." Then the king entered the hall with five knights in embroidered garments. They assaulted the castle; and the six ladies, finding them to be champions of redoubtable valour, having demanded a parley, yielded up their fortress, and came down and danced with the besiegers. The ladies then led the knights into the castle, which vanished, and the spectators retired.

The singing-boys of the monasteries and churches appear, from an early period, to have been employed in dramatic representations. These were at first on religious subjects, and performed on the great festivals of the church. So early as the year 1378, the scholars or choristers of St. Paul's cathedral, in London, petitioned Richard II. to prohibit certain ignorant and inexperienced persons from acting *The History of the Old Testament*, to the great prejudice of the clergy of the church, who had put themselves to considerable expense in preparing for a public representation of that play at the ensuing Christmas. In the year 1554, when the Princess Elizabeth resided at Hatfield House, she was visited by Queen Mary. After mass, they were entertained with a grand exhibition of bear-baiting, "with which," says the chronicler, "their highnesses were right well content;" and, after supper, a play was presented by the children of Paul's. After the play, and the next morning, one of the boys sang to the princess, while she "plaid at the virginals." Strype describes a magnificent entertainment given to Queen Elizabeth, in 1559, by the Earl of Arundel, at the ancient palace of Nonsuch, in Surrey. "There the queen had a great entertainment, with banquets, especially on Sunday night, made by the said earl; together with a masque, and the warlike sounds of drums, and flutes, and all kind of music, till midnight. On Monday was a great supper made for her; and at night was a play by the children of Paul's, and their music-master, Sebastian. After that, a costly banquet, accompanied with drums and flutes. This entertainment lasted till three in the morning; and the earl presented her majesty a cupboard of plate." In the year 1562, when the society of parish-clerks in London celebrated one of their annual feasts, after morning service in Guildhall chapel, they retired to their hall, where, after dinner, "a goodly play" was performed by the choristers of Westminster Abbey, "with waits, and regals, and singing." The children of the chapel-royal were also famous actors, and were formed into a company of players, by Queen Elizabeth. All Lily's plays, and many of Shakspeare's and Jonson's, were originally performed by these juvenile actors, and it seems probable, that the title given by Jonson to one of his comedies, called *Cynthia's Revels*, was an allusion to this establishment of Queen Elizabeth, one of whose romantic names was Cynthia.\*

\* The musical comedy of "Damon and Pythias," which has been already described, was performed before the queen, by the children of her chapel.

The gentlemen of the Inns of Court, in those days, were much given to dramatic representations. John Roos, a student of Gray's Inn, and afterwards a sergeant-at-law, wrote a comedy which was acted in the hall of the society, at Christmas, 1527. It gave such offence to Cardinal Wolsey, probably from its containing reflections on the pomp and arrogance of the clergy, that the author was degraded and imprisoned. In 1561, the tragedy of *Ferrex and Porrex* was performed before Queen Elizabeth, at Whitehall, by the gentlemen of the Inner Temple. Decker, in his satire against Jonson, accuses him of having stolen jokes from the Christmas plays of the Templars. "You shall swear not to bumbast out a new play with the old lynng of jestes stolne from the Temple-revella." In the year 1613, the Society of Lincoln's Inn presented a masque at Whitehall, before James I., in honour of the marriage of the Princess Elizabeth with the elector palatine; and, on the same occasion, was performed "The Masque of Gray's Inn Gentlemen, and the Inner Temple," by Beaumont and Fletcher.

Some of these masques, presented by the members of these learned societies, were written by men of genius, and contain beautiful poetry. Among these may be mentioned, "The Inner Temple Masque," on the story of Circe and Ulysses, written by William Browne, a student of that society, about the year 1620.\* In this piece there is the following fine song, which Circe sings as a charm to drive away sleep from Ulysses, who is discovered reposing under a tree.

"Son of Erebus and Night,  
Hie away and aim thy flight,  
Where consort none other fowl  
Than the bat and sullen owl:  
Where, upon the limber grass,  
Poppy and mandragoras,  
With like simples not a few,  
Hang for ever drops of dew:  
Where flows Lethe, without coil,  
Softly like a stream of oil.  
Hie thee thither, gentle Sleep!  
With this Greek no longer keep.  
Thrice I charge thee by my wand,  
Thrice with moly from my hand,  
Do I touch Ulysses' eyes,  
And with th' iaspis. Then arise,  
Sagest Greek!"

Warton remarks, that this song brings to mind some favourite touches in Milton's *Comus*; and is of opinion that a masque, thus recently exhibited on the story of Circe, and which there is every reason to think had acquired some popularity, probably suggested to Milton the idea of a masque on a similar subject. "It would be superfluous," Warton adds, "to point out minutely the absolute similarity of the two characters: they both deal in incantations, conducted by the same mode of operation, and producing effects exactly parallel."

The masques, which formed the favourite amusement of the court during the reigns of James and Charles the First, were almost all composed by Ben Jonson, and are a delightful portion of his works. They have suffered much less from the injuries of time than his regular dramas, especially his comedies, which are founded, not so much on the permanent varieties of human character, as on the obsolete manners and peculiarities or *humours* of his own age, and are full, moreover, of allusions which all the labours of antiquarian research have not succeeded in rendering intelligible. Jonson's lyrical productions seem to belong to another and a later age. The style differs from that of the present day in little more than its richness of classical imagery; a richness which has exposed the poet, though unjustly, to the charge of pedantry. His garb is magnificent, but not cumbrous; its gorgeous ornaments are tasteful and well disposed; and he wears it lightly and gracefully. Nothing can be more flowing and harmonious than the poetry of these pieces, both in the spoken dialogues and the songs; and their lofty sentiments, and purity of thought, although written for the entertainment of a court, the manners of which were any thing but pure, give an exalted idea of the character of their author.

\* Browne's works were published in 1772; and some additional specimens of his poetry have been given to the world by Sir Egerton Brydges. He does not appear to have gained the reputation which he deserves.



These masques were professed imitations of the newly created Italian opera of that day. In some of them the dialogue is directed to be delivered "in *stilo recitativo*:" and the music, being the production of Italian composers, was of course in the Italian style. They resembled the Italian opera, too, in being founded on mythological subjects, and in being performed with great splendour of scenery and decoration. At this time all attempts to heighten the illusion of the stage by scenic display were confined to the expensive entertainments of the court. Queen Anne, the consort of James the First, took great delight in these performances, in which she herself, with her children, and the nobles and ladies of the court, took a part, figuring in the pageants and dancing in the ballets. Modern writers have characterised these court pastimes as pedantic and tasteless, pompous and operose. Surely, however, so permanent a relish for a kind of entertainment which employed the highest powers of one of our greatest poets, indicated considerable refinement of taste, if not of manners; and the opinion of Gifford\* is at least as near the truth, notwithstanding the characteristic asperity with which it is expressed. "It must have been a very graceful and splendid entertainment: and, with due respect be it spoken, nearly as worthy of the nobility as the private masquerades, &c. which, with such advantage to good manners, have been substituted for it. It is with peculiar modesty that we, who cannot eke out an evening's entertainment without the introduction of gamblers, hired buffoons, and voluntary jack-puddings, declaim on the 'pedantry and wretched taste' of James and his court."

But whatever may be said in defence of the taste of a court which was addicted to this species of amusement, nothing can be said in favour of its manners. Sir John Harrington, in his *Nuxæ Antiquæ*, gives an account of a scene which took place at the performance of one of these masques, during the visit of Christian IV. of Denmark to England, so extraordinary as to be almost incredible, were it not for the character of the relation. "One day," he says, "a great feast was held, and after dinner, the representation of Solomon his Temple, and the coming of the Queen of Sheba, was made, (or, as I may better say,) was meant to have been made before their majesties, by device of the Earl of Salisbury and others. But, alas! as all earthly things do fail to poor mortals in enjoyment, so did prove our presentment hereof. The ladie, who did play the queen's part, did carry most precious gifts to both their majesties; but, forgetting the steps arising to the canopy, overset her caskets into his Danish majesty's lap, and fell at his feet, though I rather think it was in his face. Much was the hurry and confusion; clothes and napkins were at hand to make all clean. His majesty then got up, and would dance with the Queen of Sheba, but he fell down, and humbled himself before her, and was carried to an inner chamber, and laid upon a bed of state, which was not a little defiled with the presents of the queen, which had been bestowed on his garments; such as wine, cream, jelly, beverage, cakes, spices, and other good matters. The entertainment and show went forward, and most of the presenters went backward, or fell down; wine did so occupy their upper chambers. Now did appear, in rich dresses, Hope, Faith, and Charity: Hope did essay to speak, but wine rendered her endeavours so feeble that she withdrew, and hoped the king would excuse her brevity: Faith was then left all alone, for I am certain she was not joined with good words, and left the court in a staggering condition. Charity came to the king's feet, and seemed to cover the multitude of sins her sisters had committed; in some sort she made obeisance, and brought gifts, but said she would return home again, as there was no gift which heaven had not already given his majesty. She then returned to Hope and Faith, who were both sick in the lower hall. Next came Victory, in bright armour, and presented a rich sword to the king, (who did not accept it, but put it by with his hand,) and by a strange medley of versification did endeavour to make suit to the king. But Victory did not triumph long; for, after much lamentable utterance, she was led away like a silly captive, and laid to sleep on the outer steps of the ante-chamber. Now did Peace make entry, and strove to get foremost to the king; but I grieve to tell how great wrath she did discover unto those of her

attendants, and, much contrary to her semblance, most rudely made war with her olive branch, and laid on the pates of those who did oppose her coming. I have much marvelled at these strange pageantries; and they do bring to my remembrance what part of this sort in our queen's days, of which I was some time a humble presenter and assistant, but I ne'er did see such lack of good order, discretion, and sobriety, as I have now done. I have passed much time in seeing the royal sports of hunting and hawking, where the manners were such as made me devise the beasts were pursuing the sober creation, and not man in quest of exercise and food. I will now, in good sooth, declare to you, who will not blab, that the gunpowder fright is got out of all our heads, and we are going on hereabouts as if the devil was contriving every man should blow up himself by wild riot, excess, and devastation of time and temperance."

Jonson's masques, extending over a period of thirty years, are numerous. The first of them was performed in 1605, on the occasion of the marriage of Sir Philip Herbert and the Lady Susan Vere. It was called *The Masque of Blackness*, from the queen and a bevy of her ladies personating twelve Ethiopian nymphs, daughters of the Niger, who came to England in search of a wash to whiten their complexions. It did not escape the lash of the wits of the time. Sir Dudley Carlton gives a ludicrous description of the exhibition. "At night we had the queen's mask in the banqueting-house, or rather her pageant. There was a great engine at the lower end of the room, which had motion, and in it were the images of sea horses, with other terrible fishes, which were ridden by Moors. The indecorum was, that there was all fish and no water. At the further end was a great shell in the form of a scallop, wherein were four seats; on the lowest sat the queen with my lady Bedford; on the rest were placed the ladies Suffolk, Derby, Rich, Effingham, Ann Herbert, Susan Herbert, Elizabeth Howard, Walsingham, and Bevil. Their appearance was rich, but too light and courtizan-like for such great ones. Instead of vizards, their faces and arms up to the elbows were painted black, which was disguise sufficient, for they were hard to be known; but it became them nothing so well as their red and white; and you cannot imagine a more ugly sight than a troop of lean cheeked Moors. The Spanish and Venetian ambassadors were both present, and sat by the king in state. The Spanish ambassador took out the queen, and forgot not to kiss her hand, though there was danger it might have left a mark on his lips." The conclusion of the revel is characteristic of the age. "The night's work was concluded with a banquet in the great chamber, which was so furiously assaulted, that down went tables and tressels before one bit was touched."

One of the prettiest of these pieces, called *The Masque of Hymen*, was performed at the ill-starred nuptials of Robert Earl of Essex, and the lady Frances Howard, daughter of the Earl of Suffolk. This couple were mere children; the bridegroom in his fourteenth, and the bride in her thirteenth year. Essex was sent abroad on his travels; and his wife, in his absence, entered into a guilty intrigue with Robert Carr, Viscount Rochester, the celebrated favourite of James. After Essex's return, she found means to obtain a scandalous divorce, and immediately married her paramour, who was at the same time made Earl of Somerset. Sir Thomas Overbury, who had endeavoured to prevent this union, was poisoned in the tower by creatures of the earl and countess; and though they, as well as their agents, were tried and condemned for this atrocious deed, yet the lives of the principal criminals, for some unaccountable reason, were spared by the king. They lived for many years slurred by every one, and adding to the wretchedness of their existence the bitterness of a mutual hatred, so intense and implacable, that, though dwelling in the same house, they were never seen to exchange a single word. Before her disgraceful second marriage this lady appears to have been a frequent performer in the court entertainments. This second marriage was favoured by James, still under the influence of his minion, and a splendid masque was performed in celebration of it; but this masque was not written by Jonson.

*The Hue and Cry after Cupid* was performed at the Lord Viscount Haddington's marriage at court, on the Shrove Tuesday, at night, 1608. This Lord Haddington was the Sir John Ramsay who had saved the king's life, by stabbing the Earl of Gowrie, when he and his brother

made their memorable assault on the king, at Perth, in the year 1600. This piece contains some fine lyrics. The following song, sung by the three Graces, may be taken as a specimen of Jonson's musical numbers.

*1st Grace.* Beauties, have you seen this toy,  
Called Love, a little boy,  
Almost naked, wanton, blind;  
Cruel now, and then as kind?  
If he be among ye, say;  
He is Venus' runaway.

*2d Grace.* She that will but now discover  
Where the winged wag doth hover,  
Shall to-night receive a kiss,  
How, or where, herself would wish;  
But, who brings him to his mother,  
Shall have that kiss, and another.

*3d Grace.* He hath marks about him plenty;  
You shall know him among twenty,  
All his body is a fire,  
And his breath a flame entire,  
That being shot, like lightning, in,  
Wounds the heart, but not the skin.

*1st Grace.* At his sight, the sun hath turn'd;  
Neptune in the waters burn'd;  
Hell hath felt a greater heat;  
Jove himself forsok his seat:  
From the centre of the sky  
Are his trophies rear'd on high.

*2d Grace.* Wings he hath, which though ye clip,  
He will leap from lip to lip,  
Over liver, lights, and heart,  
But not stay in any part;  
And if chance his arrow misses,  
He will shoot himself, in kisses.

*3d Grace.* He doth bear a golden bow,  
And a quiver, hanging low,  
Full of arrows that outbrave  
Dian's shafts: where, if he have  
Any head more sharp than other,  
With that first he strikes his mother.

*1st Grace.* Still the fairest are his fuel,  
When his days are to be cruel,  
Lovers' hearts are all his food,  
And his baths their warmest blood.  
Nought but wounds his hand doth season  
And he hates none like to Reason.

*2d Grace.* Trust him not; his words, though sweet,  
Seldom with his heart do meet.  
All his practice is deceit;  
Every gift it is a bait;  
Not a kiss but poison bears,  
And most treason in his tears.

*3d Grace.* Idle minutes are his reign;  
Then, the struggler makes his gain,  
By presenting maids with toys,  
And would have ye think them joys;  
'Tis the ambition of the elf,  
To have all childish as himself.

*1st Grace.* If by these ye please to know him,  
Beauties, be not nice, but show him.

*2d Grace.* Though ye had a will to hide him;  
Now, we hope, ye'll not abide him.

*3d Grace.* Since you heard his falser play;  
And that he's Venus' runaway.

Another of these masques, *The Masque of Queens*, was performed on the occasion of Prince Henry being created Prince of Wales, in 1610. It exhibited twelve ladies seated on thrones in the form of a pyramid, eleven of whom represented the like number of queens, of different times and countries, who had been illustrious for great qualities and virtues; and the twelfth was Queen Anne herself, who appeared in her own character, and under the poetical name of Bel-anna, seated at the summit of the pyramid, a place assigned her by the unanimous voice of her sister queens, as combining in herself all the qualities for which they severally had been distinguished. As a contrast to this picture of True Fame, there was an anti-masque of twelve women, appearing as witches, and representing Ignorance, Suspicion, Credulity, and other allegorical personages, the

\* See note on the masque, "Pleasure reconciled to Virtue," in Gifford's edition of Jonson.

opposites to good Fame. This piece of *diablerie* so strongly excited the imagination of the young prince, that he desired Jonson, when the piece was published, to add notes to it, explaining the sources from which all his spells, incantations, and magical ceremonies, had been derived: and these notes form a learned and curious treatise on witchcraft. The scenes of the witches have given rise to a good deal of controversy among the critics. By some it is contended that they were written in imitation, or rivalry, of Shakespeare: while, by others, this accusation is denied, and Jonson's originality strenuously defended. The general resemblance of these scenes to those in *Macbeth* is indeed very strong; though it may have arisen without plagiarism on either hand.

In this masque, as in *Macbeth*, there is a principal hag, to whom the others give an account of their doings in her absence. Here are some of them.

1st Hag. I have been all day looking after  
A raven feeding upon a quarter;  
And, soon as she turn'd her beak to the south,  
I snatch'd the morsel out of her mouth.

3d Hag. I last night lay all alone  
On the ground, to hear the mandrake groan,  
And pluck'd him up, though he grew full low;  
And as I had done, the cock did crow.

4th Hag. And I have been choosing out this skull,  
From charnal houses that were full;  
From private grots, and public pits;  
And frighted a sexton out of his wits.

7th Hag. A murderer, yonder, was hung in chains,  
The sun and the wind had shrunk his veins;  
I hit off a sinew; I clipp'd his hair;  
I brought off his rags that danced in the air.

9th Hag. And I have been plucking plants among,  
Hemlock, henbane, adder's tongue,  
Nightshade, moon-wort, libbard's bane;  
And twice, by the dogs, was like to be ta'en.

10th Hag. I, from the jaws of a gardener's bitch,  
Did snatch these bones, and then leap'd the ditch;  
Yet back I went to the house again,  
Kill'd the black cat, and here's the brain.

11th Hag. I went to the toad breeds under the wall,  
I charm'd him out, and he came at my call;  
I scratch'd out the eyes of the owl before;  
I tore the bat's wing; what would you have more!

Dame (the chief hag.) Yes, I have brought, to help  
our vows,

Horned puppy, cypress boughs,  
The fig tree wild that grows on tombs,  
And juice that from the larch tree comes,  
The basilisk's blood, and the viper's skin;  
And now our orgies let us begin."

The incantations conclude thus:

"About, about, and about,  
Till the mist arise, and the lights fly out,  
The images neither be seen nor felt;  
The woollen burn, and the waxen melt:  
Sprinkle your liquors upon the ground,  
And into the air; around, around.

Around, around,  
Around, around,  
Till a music sound,  
And the pace be found,  
To which we may dance,  
And our charms advance.

"At which," says the stage direction, "with a strange and sudden music, they fall into a magical dance, full of preposterous change and gesticulation. In the heat of their dance, on a sudden was heard the sound of loud music as if many instruments had made one blast: with which not only the hags themselves, but the hell into which they ran, quite vanished, and the whole face of the scene altered, scarce suffering the memory of such a thing; but in the place of it appeared a glorious and magnificent building, figuring the House of Fame, in the top of which were discovered the twelve masquers, sitting upon a throne triumphal, erected in the form of a pyramid, and circled with all store of light." These masquers were the one real and eleven fictitious queens, already

mentioned. One of them was the Countess of Essex, then the pride and boast of the English court, and shining in all the brightness of youth, loveliness, and at least apparent innocence. In this latter part of the piece, some fine songs and choruses are introduced. The author says that "the music is the work and honour of my excellent friend Alphonso Ferabosco," and he also commemorates the talents of "that most excellent tenor voice, and exact singer, her majesty's servant Master Jo. Allen," by whom one of them was sung.

Alphonso Ferabosco, the composer of the music in the greater number of Jonson's masques, was English by birth, but Italian by parentage and education. His father, of the same name, was an eminent madrigalist, and appears to have been a superior musician. Ferabosco the younger, however, was for a long time the most fashionable composer of his day, for the stage and the chamber. The encomiastic verses by Ben Jonson and others, prefixed to a book of *Ayres*, published by him in 1609, show the opinion entertained of his merits—an opinion of which he himself largely partook: as appears from his dedication to Prince Henry, written in a quaint style of self satisfaction. "I could now," he says, "with solemn industry of many in epistles, enforce all that hath been said in praise of the faculty of musique, and make that commend the work; but I desire more, the work should commend the faculty: and therefore suffer these few *ayres* to owe their grace rather to your *Highness* judgment, than any other testimonies. I am not made of much speech; only I know them worthy of my name; and therein I took pains to make them worthy of yours." The modern ear, however, will take no pleasure in these *ayres*, or in any other specimens of this composer's music which are still extant. They are sufficiently regular in modulation and harmony; but the airs are stiff, laboured, and unmeaning; and the accent and rhythm of the poetry are quite disregarded. We cannot imagine Jonson's beautiful and flowing measures united with such dull and insipid sounds, and listened to with delight by a courtly and elegant audience. But no better melody was then known in England; and the most refined taste will rarely transcend the highest standard of existing excellence.

Another of Jonson's musical coadjutors was Nicolo Lanieri, also an Italian. He was a painter and engraver, as well as a musician; but his greatest excellence was in music. He etched a considerable number of plates for a drawing-book; was an able connoisseur in pictures; and possessed the picture dealing art of giving modern pictures an air of antiquity, and passing off copies for originals. From the directions given in the printed copies, in Jonson's works, as to the manner of performing some of the masques which Lanieri set to music, it is evident that, having newly arrived from Italy, he followed the Italian mode of the day; setting the dialogues in *stilo recitativo*, and intermingling them with airs for single voices, and choruses. Indeed, the masques of Ben Jonson, as set by Ferabosco and Lanieri, bore a much closer resemblance to the regular Italian opera than the pieces called operas which prevailed on the English stage during the greater part of the last century.

Specimens of Lanieri's music are to be found in Playford's collections. As might be expected, his recitatives are better than his airs; and are superior to those of any English composer of that day.

#### CHAPTER IV.

Time of Charles I.—Shirley's masque, *The Triumph of Peace*—Prynne's *Histrio-mastix*—Milton's *Comus*—Henry Lawes.

In the early part of the reign of Charles the First, masques remained in undiminished favour at court. They suited the gay disposition of his Queen, Henrietta Maria, and the love of dramatic amusements which she brought with her from the court of France. She was frequently a principal performer in the masques, which continued to be written chiefly by Ben Jonson. A great number of masques are mentioned as having been represented at court during the first years of Charles's reign, some of which were performed by the queen, and others by the gentlemen of the Inns of Court.

The most remarkable of the masques given by these gentlemen was one which was performed in 1633, before Charles and his court, as a testimony of loyalty to the

king on his return from Scotland, after terminating for the time the discontents of that kingdom. It was written by Shirley, and entitled *The triumph of Peace*. The circumstances connected with its performance are minutely detailed by Lord Commissioner Whitelock, in a manuscript autobiography, written by him for the use of his children.\* This masque had another object beside that of being an expression of love and duty to their majesties. "Some," says Whitelock, "held it the more seasonable, because this action would manifest the difference of their opinion from Mr. Prynne's new learning, and serve to confute his *Histrio-mastix* against interludes." Of this celebrated book, which had been published the preceding year, we shall presently give some account.

A committee of members of the four societies was appointed to manage the business; and Whitelock himself, being an amateur, was entrusted with the charge of the musical department. He made choice of Simon Ives, a musician of considerable merit, and the celebrated Henry Lawes, to compose the music of the masque, and to conduct its performance, under himself. "I also made choice," he says, "of four of the most excellent of the queen's chapel, M. La Ware, M. Duval, M. Robert, and M. Mari, with divers others of foreign nations, who were most eminent in their art, not in the least neglecting my own countrymen whose knowledge of music rendered them useful in this action, to bear their parts in the musick, which I resolved, if I could, to have so performed, as might excell any that ever before this time had been in England. Herein I kept my purpose, causing the meetings of all the musitians to be frequent at my house in Salisbury Court; and there I have had together at one time, of English, French, Italian, German, and other masters of musick, forty lutes, besides other instruments, and voyces of the most excellent kind in consort."

The masque was performed on Candlemas night, the persons engaged in it having proceeded, in procession, from Ely-house in Holborn, to Whitehall. This procession is minutely described, and must have been a magnificent affair. The actors in the masque were sixteen in number, four gentlemen of each Inn, who were drawn in four chariots and six. There were "one hundred gentlemen of the Inns of Court in very rich cloathes, five and twenty chosen out of each house, of the most proper and handsome young gentlemen of the societies. Every one of them was gallantly mounted, on the best horses, and with the best furniture that the king's stable and the stables of all the nobility in towne could afford, and they were forward on this occasion to lend them. The richness of the apparel and furniture, glittering by the light of the multitude of torches attending them, with the motion and stirring of the mettled horses, and the many and various gay liveries of their servants, but especially the personal beauty and gallantry of the handsome young gentlemen, made the most glorious and splendid show that ever was beheld in England."

This gallant array was followed by a series of anti-masques, or burlesque processions of beggars mounted on the most sorry jades that could be procured, men on horseback imitating the notes of birds, and disguised in the shapes of animals, with other devices of a ludicrous and satirical kind. In one of them "rode a fellow upon a little horse with a great bit in his mouth and upon the man's head was a bit with headstall and reins, fastened, and signified a projector, that none in the kingdom might ride their horses but with such bits as they should buy of him. Another projector, who begged a patent of monopoly to feed capons with carrots; and several other projectors, were in like manner personated, which pleased the spectators the more, because by it an information was covertly given to the king of the unfitness and ridiculousness of these projects, against the law; and the attorney Noy, who had most knowledge of them, had a great hand in this anti-masque of the projectors."

When the procession arrived at Whitehall, through streets crowded with spectators, "the king and queen stood at a window looking straight forward into the street, to see the masque come by, and being delighted with the noble bravery of it, they sent to the marshall to desire that the whole show might fetch a turne about the

\* This account, here abridged, is quoted at full length by Burney, vol. iii. p. 369.

Tilt-yard, that their majesties might have a double view of them; which was done accordingly, and then they alighted at Whitehall gate, and were conducted to several rooms and places prepared for them.

"The king and queen and all their noble train being come in, the masque began, and was incomparably performed, in the dancing, speeches, musick, and scenes; the dances, figures, properties, the voices, instruments, songs, aiers, composures, the words and actions, were all of them exact, none sayled in their parts, and the scenes were most curious and costly. The queen did the honour to some of the masquers to dance with them herself, and to judge them as good dancers as ever she saw, and the great ladies were very free and civil in dancing with all the masquers as they were taken out by them. Thus, they continued in their sports untill it was almost morning, and then, the king and queen retiring, the masquers and Innes of Court gentlemen were brought to a stately banquet, and after that was dispersed, every one departed to his own quarters."

The queen was so delighted with this show, that it was repeated at Merchant Tailors' hall, where a banquet was given to their majesties by the lord mayor. "This," says Whitelock, "gave great contentment to their majesties, and no less to the citizens, especially those of the younger sort, and of the female sexe, and it was to the great honour and no less charge of the lord mayor and freemen."

"After these dreames past," he continues, "and these pompes vanished, all men were satisfied by the committee justly and bountifully. For the musick, which was particularly committed to my charge, I gave to Mr. Ives and to Mr. Lawes £100 apiece for their rewards; for the four French gentlemen, the queen's servants, I thought that a handsome and liberal gratifying of them would be made known to the queen, their mistress, and well taken by her. I therefore invited them one morning to a collation at St. Dunstan's tavern, in the great room, the oracle of Apollo, where each of them had his plate layd for him, covered, and the napkin by it; and when they opened their plates they found in each of them forty pieces of gold, of their master's coyn, for the first dish, and they had cause to be much pleased with this surprisall. The rest of the musitions had rewards answerable to their parts and qualities; and the whole charge of the musick came to about one thousand pounds. The clothes of the horsemen reckoned one with another at £100 a suit, at the least, amounted, to £10,000. The charges of all the rest of the masque, which were borne by the societies, were accounted to be above twenty thousand pounds."\*

The book by William Prynne, which is alluded to by Whitelock, and the effects of which were attempted to be counteracted by the exhibition of the above masque, had been published in the preceding year, 1632. It is entitled "Histrio-mastix, the Player's Scourge, or Actor's Tragedie, in which it is pretended to be evidenced, that stage-plays (the very pompes of the devil, which we renounced in baptism, if we believe the fathers) are sinful, heathenish, lewde, ungodly spectacles, and most pernicious corruptions; condemned in all ages as intolerable mischiefs to churches, to republickes, to the man-

\* In Whitelock's account there is a trait of simple vanity too characteristic to be omitted. "I was conversant with the musitions, and so willing to gain their favour, especially at this time, that I composed an aire myself, with the assistance of Mr. Ives, and called it *Whitelock's Coranto*; which being cied up, was first played publicly, by the Blackfryar's musicke, who were then esteemed the best of common musitions in London. Whenever I came to that house (as I sometimes did in those days, though not often) to see a play, the musitions would presently play *Whitelock's Coranto*, and it was so often called for that they would have it played twice or three times in an afternoon. The queen hearing it, would not be persuaded that it was made by an Englishman, because she said it was fuller of life and spirit than the English aire use to be; butt she honoured the *Coranto* and the maker of it with her majesty's roiall commendation. It grew to that request, that all the common musitions in this towne, and all over the kingdom, gott the composition of it, and played it publicly in all places, for above thirtie years after." *Whitelock's Coranto* has been preserved from oblivion by being inserted in the histories of both Hawkins and Burney.

ners, minds, and soules of men. And that the profession of play-poets, of stage-players, together with the penning, acting, and frequenting of stage-plays, are unlawful, infamous, and misbecoming Christians. All pretences to the contrarie are here likewise fully answered, and the unlawfulness of acting or beholding academically interludes briefly discussed, besides sundry other particulars concerning dancing, dicing, health-drinking, &c." This ample title gives a very good summary of the contents of the book, which is directed not only against plays performed in public theatres, but also against "academically interludes" or the masques and other entertainments, then so much in fashion, presented by the students of the Inns of Court.

Prynne is a bitter enemy of music, and inveighs against its use, not only in connection with dramatic entertainments, but in all circumstances whatever, excepting in psalm-singing. He affirms that one unlawful concomitant of stage-plays is amorous, obscene, lascivious, lust-provoking songs and poems; which, he says, were once so odious in our church, that in the articles to be enquired of in visitations, set forth in the first year of Queen Elizabeth's reign, churchwardens were enjoined to enquire "whether any minstrels or any other persons did use to sing or say any songs or ditties that be vile and unclean." He maintains, on the authority of Clemens Alexandrinus, "that cymbals and dulcimers are instruments of fraud; that pipes and flutes are to be abandoned from a sober feast; and that chromatical harmonies are to be left to impudent malapertness in wine, to lewd music crowned with flowers." And upon these solid and rational grounds he inveighs with the utmost violence against all pastimes in which music has any share.

This book, however absurd and ridiculous its contents may now appear, was, at the time of its publication, looked upon in a very different light. It spoke the sentiments of the Puritans, a great and increasing body, who held in abomination all those amusements against which it was levelled. By them, therefore, it was received with great approbation, while it excited the indignation and alarm of the court-party, who held it to be a satire against their majesties themselves, as being fond of these pastimes. The queen was supposed to be especially aimed at, because she frequently acted a part in the masques which were performed at court; and the phrase in the table of contents, "Women actors notorious courtizans," was considered an innuendo against her majesty. Prynne, therefore, who was a barrister of Lincoln's Inn, was indicted in the court of Star-chamber, that memorable instrument of arbitrary power, for a libel.

The enormity of Prynne's offence, in the eyes of the court, was heightened by the manner in which he had attacked the hierarchy, and the ceremonies and innovations in religious worship lately introduced by Laud. "The music of the churches," he had said in his characteristic style, "is not the noise of men, but a bleating of brute beasts; choristers bellow the tenor as if it were oxen; bark a counterpart as if it were a kennel of dogs; roar out a treble as if it were a sort of bulls; and grunt out a bass as if it were a number of hogs." He said that Christmas, as it was kept, was the devil's Christmas; and endeavoured to persuade men to affect the name of Puritan, as if our Saviour himself had been of that persuasion.

These accumulated provocations may account for, though they cannot justify, the spirit of hatred and revenge by which the judges were actuated, and the excessive severity, or rather barbarity, of the punishment inflicted on the unfortunate culprit. "It is a strange thing," said the Lord Chief Justice, "what this man taketh upon him; he is not like those powder-traitors, they would have blown us all up at once; this throweth all down at once to hell together, and delivereth them over to Satan. I beseech your lordships to give me leave. 'Stage-plays,' &c. saith he, 'none are gainers and honoured by them but the devil and hell; and when they have taken their wills in lust there, their souls go to eternal torment hereafter;' and this must be the end of this monster's horrible sentence. He saith, 'So many as are in playhouses are so many unclean spirits;' and that 'play-haunters are little better than incarnate devils.' He doth not only condemn all play-writers, but all protectors of them and all beholding of them: and dancing at plays and singing at plays they are all damned, and

that no less than to hell. I beseech your lordships to give me leave, but in a word, to read to you what he writes of dancing, &c. 'It is the devil's profession; and he that entereth into a dance entereth into a devilish profession; and so many paces in a dance, so many paces to hell. This is what he conceiveth of dancing. 'The woman that singeth in the dance is the prioress of the devil, and those that answer are clerks, and the beholders are the parishioners, and the music are bells, and the fiddlers are the minstrels of the devil,' I said it was a seditious libel; this point of sedition is the only thing that troubles me, and it is that which I shall offer to your lordships; for I do know it, the good opinion, heart, will, and affections of the king's people and subjects are the king's greatest treasure." The Earl of Dorset said, "Mr. Prynne, I do declare you to be a schism-maker in the church, a sedition-monger in the commonwealth, a wolf in sheep's clothing; in a word, 'omnium malorum nequissimus.' I shall fine him £10,000, which is more than he is worth, yet less than he deserveth; I will not set him at liberty no more than a plagued man or a mad dog, who, though he cannot bite, he will foam; he is so far from being a sociable soul that he is not a rational soul; he is fit to live in dens with such beasts of prey as wolves and tigers like himself. Therefore I do condemn him to perpetual imprisonment as those monsters that are no longer to live among men, nor to see light. Now for corporal punishment, my lords; whether should I burn him in the forehead or slit him in the nose? He that was guilty of murder was marked in a place where he might be seen, as Cain was. I should be loth he should escape with his ears, for he may get a periwig, which he now so much inveighs against, and so hide them, or force his conscience to make use of his unlovely love-locks on both sides. Therefore I would have him branded in the forehead, slit in the nose, and his ears cropped too. My lords, I now come to this ordure; I can give no better term to it, to burn it, as it is common in other countries, or otherwise we shall bury Mr. Prynne and suffer his ghost to walk. I shall therefore concur in the burning of the book; but let there be a proclamation made, that whoever shall keep any of the books in his hands and not bring them to some public magistrate to be burnt in the fire, let them fall under the sentence of this court." These brutal suggestions were not entirely adopted: but Prynne was sentenced to be put on the pillory in two places, Westminster and Cheapside; to lose both his ears, one on each place; to pay £5,000 fine to the king; and to be imprisoned during life: and this sentence was executed.

Milton's Masque of *Comus*, one of the brightest gems of English poetry, was written for the Earl of Bridgewater, at whose mansion it was first performed in 1634. The story of the piece was founded on an incident which had occurred to the earl's children. When he resided at Ludlow Castle, in Shropshire, his two sons, Lord Brackley and Mr. Egerton, and his daughter Lady Alice Egerton, were benighted in passing through a neighbouring forest, and the young lady for some time could not be found. This adventure excited Milton's imagination, and gave rise to the masque, which was represented on Michaelmas-eve for the amusement of the family and the nobility and gentry of the neighbourhood. The two brothers were performed by the earl's sons, and his daughter was the lady. Lady Alice Egerton, who was then a girl of thirteen, afterwards became lady Vaughan and Carbury, and was distinguished for her talents and accomplishments.

Henry Lawes, the celebrated composer of the music in this masque, taught music in the family of Lord Bridgewater, and Lady Alice Egerton was his pupil. His first book of "Ayres and Dialogues," published in 1653, is dedicated to her, and Lady Herbert of Cherbury, her sister. Lawes himself acted the part of the attendant spirit. In 1637 Lawes published the poem of *Comus*; but the music does not appear to have ever been printed. It appears, however, from a manuscript in Lawes' own handwriting, mentioned by Hawkins and Burney, that the two songs, "Sweet Echo" and "Sabrina fair," together with three other passages in the poem—"Back, shepherds, back," "To the ocean now I fly," and "Now my task is smoothly done," were probably the whole of the original music; and that the rest of the poetry was simply declaimed.

If we were to judge of the genius of Henry Lawes

from the specimen given of it by Hawkins and Burney, the song, "Sweet Echo," in this masque, our opinion certainly would be very unfavourable. The lyrical beauty of the words does not seem to have inspired the composer. His music has neither the accent and emphasis of *recitative*, nor the rhythmical flow of *air*. It is a sort of stiff and constrained chant, destitute of melody, and, except in the passage—

"Where the love-lorn nightingale  
Nightly to thee her sad song mourneth well,"

where there is a glimmering of feeling at the words "sad song,"—it is equally destitute of expression.

Though we agree with Burney in his strictures on this composition, yet we think he has led the world to entertain an erroneous opinion of Lawes' character as a musician. "I have examined," he says, "with care and candour all the works I can find of this composer, which are still very numerous, and am obliged to own myself unable, by their excellence, to account for the great reputation he acquired, and the numerous panegyrics bestowed on him by the greatest poets and musicians of his time." "But *bad* as the music of Lawes appears to us," he says in another place, "it seems to have been sincerely admired by his contemporaries in general." And he adds, that "most of the productions of this celebrated musician are languid and insipid, and equally devoid of learning and genius."

If such was Lawes' musical character, the fact, that no musician ever enjoyed, in a greater degree, the admiration of his contemporaries, is singular and unaccountable. Burney says, "his temper and conversation must certainly have endeared him to his acquaintance, and rendered them partial to his productions." This is true—Lawes was both esteemed and beloved; but this was not sufficient to render his music the admiration of the most accomplished, refined, and distinguished people of his time; and, in particular, to draw the most enthusiastic eulogies from Milton, whose exquisite taste had been cultivated by a residence among the poets and musicians of Italy. In *Comus* there are several beautiful allusions to Lawes. The attendant spirit, a character represented by Lawes himself, says,

"———But I must put off  
These my sky robes, spun out of Iris' woof,  
And take the weeds and likeness of a swain  
That to the service of this house belongs,  
Who, with his soft pipe and smooth-dittied song,  
Well knows to still the wild winds when they roar,  
And hush the waving woods."

He is thus alluded to by the *Elder Brother*—

"Thyrsis, whose artful strains have oft delay'd  
The huddling brook to hear his madrigal,  
And sweeten'd every musk-rose of the dale."

And also in this passage—

"He loved me well, and oft would beg me sing,  
Which, when I did, he on the tender grass  
Would sit and hearken e'en to extasy."

Such warmth of expression must surely have been inspired by strains different from such as are described by Burney.

Lawes has also been praised by Waller. 'The first book of his *Ayres and Dialogues* contains encomiastic verses by that poet, by Edward and John Phillips, the nephews of Milton, and others, Fenton, the editor of Waller's works, says, that "the best poets of Lawes' time were ambitious of having their verses set to music by this admirable artist." Indeed, he not only composed music for the verses of almost every eminent poet of his time, but of many young noblemen and gentlemen, who appear to have become song-writers from the pleasure of having him to clothe their verses in a musical garb. In his different collections there are songs written by Thomas Earl of Winchelsea, William Earl of Pembroke, John Earl of Bristol, Lord Broghill, Thomas Carey, son of the Earl of Monmouth, Henry Noel, son of Lord Camden, Sir Charles Lucas, and Carew Raleigh, son of Sir Walter Raleigh. Many of the songs of these amateur poets possess great merit: and Lawes' three books of *Ayres and Dialogues* contain a body of elegant and spirited lyric poetry which deserves to be better known.

'This, too, in some degree, in the case with the music contained in these, and other collections, in which Lawes' compositions are to be found. Burney says he has examined these collections with care and candour. If so, his sweeping condemnation of the author is surprising; for we will venture to say that few musicians will examine them carefully without finding the task a very agreeable one. The trifling specimens he has given (vol. iii. p. 397) are by no means fair ones; and the songs of which he has mentioned the titles, are far from being the best he could have pointed out. We have not only found many airs which appear to be at least equal to any that had as yet been produced by English composers, but some, which are in themselves so graceful and flowing, and so happily united to elegant poetry, that they would require only the addition of a modern accompaniment, and the assistance of modern singing, to gratify the public, even at the present day. Among these we may mention "Careless of love and free from fears," and "Why shouldst thou swear I am forsworn?" both which are as smooth and melodious as if they had been composed yesterday. "Gaze not on swans in whose soft breast," would be a very pleasing song, but for a defect in the rhythm of the air; which, however, arises from an evident oversight, and is easily corrected. "Dearest, do not delay me," and "Lovely Chloris, though thine eyes," are exceedingly pretty: the latter is very like Arne's. "Water parted from the sea,"—"Little love serves my turn," in six-four time, is in a gay, dancing measure, and quite modern in its effect. "Chloris, yourself you so excel," a song by Waller, is a fine specimen of the *concerti* so fashionable in the amorous poetry of that age. It is addressed to a lady, on her singing some of the author's verses.

"Chloris, yourself you so excel,  
When you vouchsafe to breathe my thought,  
That, like a spirit, with this spell  
Of mine own teaching I am caught.

The eagle's fate and mine is one,  
That, on the shaft that made him die,  
Espy'd a feather of his own,  
Wherewith he went to soar so high.

Had Echo with so sweet a grace  
Narcissus' loud complaints return'd,  
Not for reflection of his face,  
But of his voice, the boy had mourn'd."

We do not find, it is true, in the works of Lawes, the lofty conceptions of Purcell, nor those "tender strokes of art" by which that unrivalled musician reached the inmost recesses of the soul. But Lawes was gifted with imagination, taste, and feeling; and deserves a much higher place among English composers than that which Burney and other critics have thought proper to assign him.

Of Lawes' personal history not much is known. He was admitted a gentleman of the chapel royal in 1625; and afterwards was appointed one of the public and private musicians of Charles I., with whom he was in great favour. Besides *Comus*, his principal dramatic production, he composed the music to several of the masques performed at court. On the fall of the monarchy, and the consequent abolition of the king's musical establishments, Lawes was deprived of his situations, and supported himself by teaching ladies to sing; and his subsistence derived from this source was probably scanty enough. In those days the fine arts were not, as now, supported by the patronage of the public. Wealth was little diffused, and taste and refinement still less. During the tranquil part of the reign of Charles I., it would appear that musicians must have subsisted chiefly by means of the royal household and chapel establishments, the munificence of the sovereign, and the patronage and employment of the great. There was no occupation for musicians in the families of the middle classes; nor were there concerts, or any public amusement, except the theatres, which employed but few hands, and those of an inferior order, the musical drama not yet having been introduced into public theatres. When the monarchy was overthrown, the abolition of every musical establishment, the prohibition of every entertainment of which music formed a part, and the prevalence of those opinions which discourage the use of music, even as a private amusement, must have

reduced Lawes and his tuneful brethren to depend on the very limited patronage which the higher classes were still enabled to afford them. Lawes, accordingly, in the preface to the first book of his *Ayres*, published in 1653, says, "Now we live in so sullen an age, that our profession itself hath lost its encouragement."

In 1655, Lawes published his second book, and, in 1658, his third book of *Ayres and Dialogues*. There are some passages in his prefaces to these collections, which show, that the complaints made by English musicians, of the preference given to foreign music, merely because it is foreign, are of long standing. "Wise men have observed," he says, in the preface to his first book, "our generation so giddy, that whatsoever is native (be it ever so excellent) must lose its taste, because themselves have lost theirs. For my part, I profess (and such as know me can bear me witness) I desire to render every man his due, whether strangers or natives. I acknowledge the Italians the greatest masters of music, but yet not all. And (without depressing the honour of other countries,) I may say our own nation hath had, and yet hath, as able musicians as any in Europe: and many now living (whose names I forbear) are excellent both for the voice and instruments. I never loved to set or sing words I do not understand. But this present generation is so sated with what is native, that nothing takes their ear but what is sung in a language which (commonly) they understand as little as they do the music. And to make them a little sensible of the ridiculous humour, I took a table or index of old Italian songs, (for one, two, and three voices,) and this index (which read together made a strange medley of nonsense) I set to a varied air and gave out that it came from Italy, whereby it hath passed for a rare Italian song."—"This ingenious hoax on his contemporaries is inserted as the last song in the book.—In the preface to the second book, he says, "There are knowing persons, who have been long bred in those worthily admired parts of Europe, who ascribe more to us than we to ourselves; and able musicians returning from travel do wonder to see us so thirsty after foreigners. For they can tell us (if we know it not) that music is the same in England as in Italy; the concords and discords, the passions, spirits, majesty, and humours, are all the same they are in England; their manner of composing is sufficiently known to us, their best compositions being brought over hither by those who are able enough to choose. But we must not here expect to find music at the highest, when all arts and sciences are at so low an ebb. As for myself, although I have lost my fortunes with my master (of blessed memory) I am not so low as to bow for a subsistence to the follies of this age, and to humour such as will seem to understand our art better than we that have spent our lives in it."

At the Restoration Lawes recovered his place in the chapel royal, and composed the coronation anthem for Charles II. He died in 1662, and was buried in Westminster Abbey.

## CHAPTER V.

The Commonwealth—Sir William Davenant's entertainments—His musical pieces—First female performances—Theatre established after the Restoration—Matthew Lock—*Psyche*—*Macbeth*—Duchess of Mazarin.

In the year 1647 rigorous ordinances were issued by the parliament against stage-plays, and all entertainments consisting of music and dancing, by which not only the actors in such entertainments, but all such as should be present at them, were subjected to severe punishment by fine and imprisonment. There was thus a complete cessation of dramatic performances for about ten years.

In 1656, Sir William Davenant obtained permission to open a kind of theatre at Rutland-house, in Charterhouse-square, for the exhibition of what he called "an Entertainment in Declamation and Music, after the manner of the ancients." Anthony Wood, imagining that this permission was to perform Italian operas, says: "Though Oliver Cromwell had now prohibited all other theatrical representations, he allowed of this, because, being in an unknown language, it could not corrupt the morals of the people." Sir William Davenant's *Entertainment* was wholly in the English language, nor was it an opera, though he calls it so. He seems to have

intended it as the means of overcoming the existing prejudices against dramatic representations, and of predisposing the public to receive favourably a series of exhibitions of this kind, which he had it in contemplation to give; and it appears to have answered his purpose, for it was immediately followed by a succession of dramatic performances, which Davenant continued till his death.

This "Entertainment after the manner of the ancients" is worthy of notice, as giving us some curious views of the opinions and manners of that age.

"After a flourish of music," say the stage directions, "the Prologue enters," and addresses the audience in verse, designating the forthcoming entertainment as an opera. We are then told that "a consort of instrumental musick, adapted to the sullen disposition of Diogenes, being heard awhile, the curtains are suddenly opened, and, in two gilded rostrs, appear Diogenes the cynick and Aristophanes the poet, who declaim against and for publique entertainments by moral representations." The arguments used by these orators show us what were the notions entertained at that period, in regard to dramatic entertainments. The following are such parts of them as relate to musical drama.

Diogenes thus argues against the opera:—

"Would you meet to enjoy the pleasure of musick? 'Tis a deceitful art, whose operations lead to the evil of extremes, making the melancholy to become mad, and the merry to grow fantastical. Our city's ancient stamp, the owl (which bears no part in the merry quires of the woods) denotes the wisdom, not the mirth of Athens. I would have the people of Athens, from the mason to the merchant, look as grave and thoughtful as rich mourners. They should all seem priests in the temples, philosophers in their houses, and statesmen in the streets. Then we should not need to be at the expense of public magistrates; but every man would be freely forward to rule another, and in time grow to such a height and ability in government, as we should by degrees banish the whole city; and that ostracism were happy preferment; for the rest of the world would soon invite us to rule them.

"Does not the extasie of music transport us beyond the regions of reason! Changing the sober designs of discretion into the very wildness of dreams, urging sober minds to aim at the impossible successes of Love; and enkindling in the active the destructive ambitions of war! Does it not turn the heads of the young till they grow so giddy as if they walked on pinnacles; and often divert the feet of the aged from a funeral to a wedding! And consider (my malicious friends of Athens) how you would look if you should see me, at the meer provocation of a fiddle, lead out a matron to dance at the marriage of an old philosopher's widow?

"Would you be delighted with scenes? which is, to be entertained with the deception of motion and transposition of lights; where, whilst you think you see a great battel, you are sure to get nothing by the victory. You gaze at imaginary woods and meadows, where you can neither fell nor mowe. On seas where you have no ships, and on rivers where you catch no fish. But you may find it more profitable to retire to your houses, and there study how to gain by deceiving others, than to meet in theatres, where you must pay for suffering yourselves to be deceived. This, Athenians, concerns your profit; which is a word you understand better than all the grammarians in Greece. And though the ways towards profit are somewhat dark, yet you need no light from me, which made me presume to leave my lantern at home."

Aristophanes, in his reply, thus answers the above parts of his adversary's discourse.

"He proceeds next against the ornaments of a public opera, music and scenes. But how can he avoid the traducing of music, who hath always a discord within himself, and which seems so loud, too, as if it would, a mile off, untune the harmonious soul of Plato. Music doth not heighten melancholy into madness, but rather unites and recollects a broken and scattered minde; giving it sudden strength to resist the evils it hath long and strongly bred. Neither doth it make the merry seem fantastical, but only to such as are enviously sad at the pleasure of others. If it doth warm the ambitious when they are young, 'tis but as cordials warm the blood, to make it evaporate the evil humour. If it awake hope in the aged, (where hope is fallen asleep and would take rest,) we may therefore say, (since hope is the vital heat

of the minde,) that it prolongs life when it would slothfully expire. Nor need Diogenes suspect that it may make his bones ake by seducing him to a dance; for he can only lift up his feet to a dismal discord, or dance to a consort of groaners or gnashers of teeth.

"He is offended at scenes in the opera, as at the useless visions of imagination. Is it not the safest and shortest way to understanding, when you are brought to see vast seas and provinces, fleets, armies, and forts, without the hazards of a voyage, or pains of a long march! Nor is that deception where we are prepared and consent to be deceived. Nor is there much loss in that deception where we gain some variety of experience by a short journey of the sight. When he gives you advice not to lay out time in prospect of woods and meadows which you can never possess, he may as well shut up his own little window (which is the bung-hole of his tub) and still remain in the dark, because the light can only show him that which he can neither purchase nor beg."

Having thus turned into ridicule the ascetic doctrines of the puritans on this subject, the author winds up this part of the entertainment with a song, concluding thus:

"Can age e'er do them harm  
Who cheerfully grow old?  
Mirth keeps their hearts still warm;  
Fools think themselves safe in sorrow and cold.  
[Chorus.] Then let the sour cynic live coopt;  
Let him quake in his threadbare cloak.  
Till he find his old tub unhoop'd,  
His staff and his lantern broke."

"The song being ended," continues the stage directions, "a consort of instrumental music, after the French composition, being heard awhile, the curtains are suddenly opened, and in the rostrs appear sitting a Parisian and a Londoner, in the livery robes of both cities, who declaim concerning the pre-eminence of London and Paris."

"These declamations being ended, the curtains were suddenly closed, and the company entertained by vocal and instrumental music, with a satirical song against the French, giving the palm to our own metropolis. Then there is an epilogue: and "after a flourish of loud music," the curtain is closed, and the entertainments ended.

At the end of the piece, there is a note, stating, that "the vocal and instrumental music was composed by Doctor Charles Coleman, Captain Henry Cook, Mr. Henry Lawes, and Mr. George Hudson." These were among the most eminent musicians of the time. Henry Cook was educated in the chapel royal, during the reign of Charles the First; but at the commencement of the civil war he entered the army, in which he obtained a captain's commission. After the restoration, the loyalty and ability of this musical soldier recommended him to the notice of Charles the Second, by whom he was appointed master of the children of the chapel royal. The specimens of his music which remain are of little merit. He was the musical instructor of Humphrey, Blow, and Wise; and is said by Anthony Wood to have died of grief, in the year 1672, in consequence of his talents and reputation having been eclipsed by those of his pupil, Humphrey. Coleman and Hudson were gentlemen of the private music of Charles the First. No farther particulars of their lives are recorded.

Davenant's "Entertainment after the manner of the Ancients," was immediately succeeded by *The Siege of Rhodes*, which was performed at Rutland House, in 1656. Pope says, that "this was the first opera sung in England;" and Langbaine, in his *Account of the English Dramatic Poets*, says that *The Siege of Rhodes*, and some other plays of Sir William Davenant, in the times of the civil wars, were acted in *stilo recitativo*. Burney disputes this; "I can find no proof," he says, "that it was sung in recitative, either in the dedication to Lord Clarendon, in the folio edition of 1673, or the body of the drama." But we find conclusive evidence on this point. Cibber says, that "Sir W. Davenant opened a theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields, in 1662, where he produced *The Siege of Rhodes*, with unprecedented splendour." A second part was then added to it, which we find in Davenant's works. Evelyn, in his *Diary*, says; "1662, Jan. 9, I saw acted 'the Second Part of the Siege of Rhodes.'" "In this," he continues, "acted the fair and famous comedian, called Roxelana, from the

part she performed; and I think it was the last, she being taken to be the Earl of Oxford's *miise* (as at this time they began to call lewd women.\*)" *It was in recitative musiq.*"

Davenant's next piece was *The cruelty of the Spaniards in Peru*, which was produced in 1658. The scenes and decorations of this drama, (according to Downes, in his *Roscius Anglicanus*;) were the first that were introduced on a public stage in England. Evelyn thus speaks of this piece; "5 May, 1659. I went to visit my brother in London, and next day to see a new opera after the Italian way, in recitative musiq, and scenes, much inferior to the Italian composure and magnificence; but it was prodigious, that, in a time of such publique consternation, such a vanity should be kept up or permitted. I being engaged with company, could not decently resist the going to see it, though my heart smote me for it." The consternation here alluded to, was occasioned by the recent death of Cromwell. We learn something of the taste of that age, in regard to *spectacle*, from a scene in this piece, which is thus described in the stage directions: "A doleful pavin, (a slow and gravo piece of music, so called from its resembling the motion of the peacock,) is played to prepare the change of the scene, which represents a dark prison at a great distance; and farther to the view, are discerned racks and other engines of torture, with which the Spaniards are tormenting the natives and English mariners, who may be supposed to be lately landed there to discover the coast. Two Spaniards are likewise discovered sitting in their cloaks, and appearing more solemn in ruffs, with rapiers and daggers by their sides; the one turning a spit, while the other is basting an Indian prince, who is roasted at an artificial fire."

The testimony of Evelyn, who, as we have already seen, was acquainted with the state of the opera in Italy, is decisive of the fact that these dramas of Davenant's were operas after the Italian way, and in recitative, however inferior they may have been to the Italian operas which he had seen, in respect to the composition of the music, and the magnificence of the representation. It is evident, too, that Davenant understood what were the peculiar features of the musical drama. In his piece, called *The Playhouse to Let*, a musician, who presents himself as a tenant for the playhouse, being asked what use he intended to make of it, answers, "I would have introduced heroique story in *stilo recitativo*;" and, upon being desired to explain himself further, he says, "Recitative musick is not composed of matter so familiar as may serve for every low occasion of discourse. In tragedy, the language of the stage is raised above the common dialect, our passions rising with the height of verse; and vocal musick adds new wings to all the flights of poetry." No musical critic of our own day could more justly express the character and office of recitative.

Davenant's pieces, though they contributed greatly to the progress of the musical drama in England, have little poetical merit. Of their music there seem to be no remains. It was in these pieces that female performers first appeared on the stage. It has been said that there were no actresses on the English stage before the restoration; and that the celebrated Mrs. Betterton was the first. It is true that the first formal license for their appearance was contained in the patent granted to Sir William Davenant, immediately after the restoration; but it appears to have been previously tolerated, for a Mrs. Coleman represented *Iunthe*, in the first part of *The Siege of Rhodes*, in 1656.

After the restoration, two theatres were established in London by royal license; the one was the *King's* theatre, in Drury lane, and the other the *Duke's*, (which was Davenant's theatre,) in Lincoln's-inn-fields. Cibber says, that, in the contest between the two companies for public favour, that of the king had the advantage; and that, therefore, "Sir William Davenant, master of the duke's company, to make head against their success, was forced to add spectacle and music to action, and to intro-

\* This actress was Mrs. Davenport. Lord Oxford, not having succeeded in his attempts to seduce her, had recourse to the stratagem of a sham marriage, by a pretended clergyman. When she discovered this infamous deception, she threw herself at the king's feet, to demand justice. Charles was not the sovereign from whom justice was to be obtained in a case like this; but Lord Oxford allowed her an annuity of three hundred pounds.



duce a new species of plays, since called dramatic operas, of which kind were *The Tempest*, *Psyche*, *Circe*, and others, all set off with the most expensive decorations of scenes and habits, with the best voices and dancers." This, however, is incorrect; for none of the above plays were performed under the management of Sir William Davenant, or even in his lifetime. Sir William died in 1668. *The Tempest*, made into an opera by Shadwell, and set to music by Matthew Lock, was first performed in 1673. In the same year appeared the opera of *Psyche*, also written by Shadwell and set to music by Lock and Battista Draghi; in 1674, *Macbeth* was brought out, as altered by Davenant; and in 1676 was produced the opera of *Circe*, written by Dr. Charles Davenant, Sir William's son, with music by John Banister. These pieces were got up at an enormous expense, in music, dancing, machinery, scenes, and decorations, in order to rival the performances of the French stage; and some of the most eminent Parisian dancers were brought over to perform in them. But at length, in 1682 (according to Cibber) the duke's company not being able to support itself separately, united with the king's, and both were incorporated under the title of the King's Company of Comedians.

After the restoration, the theatres, which in the time of James I. were no less than seventeen in number, were reduced to the two which have been mentioned. But their diminution in number was compensated by their increased magnitude and splendour. The old playhouses were either a large room in some noted tavern, or a slight building in a garden or open space behind it. The pit was unfloored; and the spectators either stood, or were badly accommodated with benches. There were hardly any attempts at scenery or decorations; and the music consisted of a few violins, hautboys, and flutes, on which vulgar tunes were played in unison, and in a wretched manner. But the two houses erected after the restoration were truly and emphatically styled theatres, as being constructed so as to accommodate a large public assembly, adorned with painting and sculpture, provided with a proper stage, and with scenes and machinery, to gratify the eye and produce theatrical illusion. A regular band of musicians was placed in the orchestra, who, between the acts, performed pieces of music composed for that purpose, and called act-tunes; and also accompanied the vocal music sung on the stage, and played the music of the dances. Music thus became attached to the theatres, which, from this time, became the principal nurseries of musicians, both composers and performers. The most favourite music was that which was heard in the dramatic pieces of the day; and to sing and play the songs, dances, and act-tunes of the theatres, became a general amusement in fashionable society.

Matthew Lock, the composer of *Psyche* and *Macbeth*, was born at Exeter, and brought up as a chorister in the cathedral of that city. We have no particulars of his life earlier than the year 1657, when he published a work called "a small consort of three parts, for viols or violins." He was employed to compose the music for the public entry of Charles II. at the restoration, and was soon afterwards appointed composer in ordinary to the king. Some of his compositions appear in the second part of Playford's continuation of Hilton's collection, entitled *Catch that Catch can*; and, among others, his three-part glee, "Ne'er trouble thyself about times or their turning," a simple and pleasing production. In the latter part of his life he became a Roman catholic, and was appointed organist to Queen Catherine of Portugal, the consort of Charles II., who was permitted the exercise of her religion, and had a chapel with a regular establishment. Lock died in 1687.

The music of the opera of *Psyche* was printed in 1675, under the following title: "The English Opera, or the vocal music in *Psyche*, with the instrumental therein intermixed. To which is adjoined, the instrumental music in the *Tempest*. By Matthew Lock, composer in ordinary to his majesty, or organist to the queen." Prefixed to it there is a preface of some length, written in a rough and vigorous style, and strongly characteristic of the irascible disposition which Lock is said to have possessed. On this account, and as it throws some light on the state of dramatic music at that time, it is worthy of quotation.

"That poetry and music, the chief manifesters of harmonical fancy, should produce such discordant effects in many, is more to be pitied than wondered at; it being

become a kind of fashionable wit to peck and carp at other men's conceptions, how mean soever their own are. Expecting, therefore, to fall under the lash of some soft-headed or hard-hearted composer (for there are too many better at finding of faults than mending them), I shall endeavour to remove those few blocks which perhaps they may take occasion to stumble at.

"The first may be the title, *opera*. To this I must answer, that the word is borrowed of the Italians, who by it distinguish their comedies from their operas; those, a short plot being laid, the comedians, according to their different themes given, speak and act *extempore*; but these, after much consideration, industry and pains for splendid scenes and machines to illustrate the grand design, with art are composed in such kinds of music as the subject requires; and accordingly performed. Proportionable to which are these compositions (the reader being referred to the book of the whole work for the particular excellences), their nature for the most part being soft, easy, and as far as my ability could reach, agreeable to the design of the author: for in them you have from ballad to single air, counterpoint, recitative, fugue, canon, and chromatic music; which variety (without vanity be it said) was never in court or theatre till now presented in this nation: though I must confess there has been something done (and more by me than any other) of this kind, and therefore it may justly wear the title, though all the tragedy be not in music; for the author prudently considered, that, though Italy was and is the great academy of the world for that science, England is not; and therefore mixt it with interlucations, as more proper to our genius.

"Another may be, the *extreme compass of some of the parts*. To which the idols of their own imagination may be pleased (if possible) to know, that he who composes for voices, not considering their extent, is like a botching stult, who, being obliged to make habits for men, cuts them out for children. I suppose it needs no explication.

"The next may be, the *extravagancies in some parts of the composition*, wherein (as among slender grammarians) they may think fixt rules are broken: but they may be satisfied, that whatever appears so, is only by way of transition from time or half-time concords, and covered by extreme parts; or to suspend the ear and judgment, for satisfying both in the cadence.

"Then, against the performance, *They sing out of tune*. To which with modesty it may be answered, *He or she that is without fault may cast the first stone*; and for those seldom defects, the major part of the vocal performers being ignorant of music, their excellencies when they do well, which generally are so, rather ought to be admired than their accidental mistakes upbraided.

"The next (and I hope the last) is, or may be, *Why, after so long exposed, is it now printed?*

"First, to manifest my duty to several persons of honour, who expected it.

"Secondly, to satisfy those lovers and understanders of music, whose business or distance prevented their seeing and hearing it.

"Thirdly, that those for whom it was composed (though perchance ignorant of the quality) by the quantity may be convinced, the composing and teaching it was not in a dream; and, consequently, that if the expense they have been at do not answer their big expectation, the fault's their own, not mine.

"Finally (by way of caution) to prevent what differences may happen between them and whoever they may have occasion to employ for the future, that on either side there be no dependence on good words or generosity."

In conformity with the views contained in this preface, Lock adopted the method, which has been generally adhered to in later times, of having the chief part of the dialogue delivered in ordinary speech, intermixing it with songs and choruses. In the songs for single voices, the melody is a sort of compound of recitative and air, with frequent changes of measure, in the style of Lulli, which was fashionable at the court of Charles II., and which Lock probably found it necessary to imitate. We find in them many traits of genius. There is one scene, in particular, "a rocky desert full of dreadful caves and cliffs," in which "two despairing men and two despairing women enter," and sing the torments of unhappy love: where there are bold and striking musical phrases, expressing passion in a manner worthy of Purcell. The choruses are generally superior to the songs. They are

more free and rhythmical in movement, and contain a great deal of good, solid, and pure harmony. One of them, a chorus of devils and furies, at the beginning of the fifth act, in six real parts (two trebles, counter tenor, tenor, and two basses) is admirable. These choruses, in short, appear to us to have much more merit than has been generally ascribed to them, and to be by no means unworthy, (as they have been said to be) of the author of the music in *Macbeth*.

The music composed by Lock for this tragedy, which appeared only a year after the *Tempest* and *Psyche*, is of such transcendent excellence, that its beauties have suffered no decay at the distance of more than a century and a half, and it promises to partake of the immortality of the great work with which it is associated. Its superiority to Lock's previous works, and the circumstance of its not having been published with his name in his own time, have given rise to doubts of his claim to its authorship; but we cannot discover any good foundation for them. Lock is named as the composer of this music by cotemporaries, and particularly by Downes, the author of the *Rossius Anglicanus*, who, from his own personal knowledge, gives a minute account of the proceedings of the duke's theatre during the period in question.

The music in *Macbeth* is a pure emanation of genius. The author seems to have been inspired by this subject, and to have been freed, by the force of his imagination, from the trammels of imitation, and adherence to the style of his day. In the music of every period there is always a body of conventional forms and phrases which become, as it were, the common property of cotemporary composers; and from the use of which, the period to which a composition belongs may in general be pretty accurately assigned. In the music of *Macbeth* there is little of this. The melody, unlike that of the time, is flowing, and highly rhythmical, while it is full of energy and expression. The harmony is rich and grateful, free from elaborate intricacy or petty details, and thrown into masses of astonishing breadth and grandeur. The sort of recitative, or rather *aria parlante* of the opening dialogue, "Speak, sister, speak," is different from any thing we have met with, either in ancient or modern music; and yet it is so simple and natural that one can hardly imagine the words uttered in any other accents. What genius there is in the chorus, "We should rejoice!" There is a character of demoniacal joy about it that would be absolutely appalling, if such pains were not taken, in our theatres, to mar the effect of this fine music, by the preposterous absurdity of the spectacle.\* There are passages, too, of great elegance and beauty; but the music is always characteristic. The air, for instance, "Let's have a dance upon the heath," is exquisitely graceful; and yet there is a touch in it of gloomy melancholy, in perfect keeping with the unearthly scene. The music in *Macbeth*, in short, was not only a stupendous effort of genius, considering the state of music in England when it was written, but is, to this day, one of the noblest and most beautiful works that ever has been produced by an English musician.

The fashionable taste in music, at this period, was much influenced by the residence, in London, of the celebrated Hortensia Mancini, Duchess of Mazarin. This lady, though an Italian by birth, had resided from her infancy, at the French court, and was the object of universal admiration from her beauty and wit. Charles the Second, when at Paris, before his restoration, was smitten with her charms, and endeavoured to obtain her in marriage: but her politic uncle, Cardinal Mazarin, not foreseeing the prosperous change in the fortunes of the British prince, refused his consent. She was afterwards married to the Duke de la Meilleraie, from whom, in a few years, she separated, leaving him possessed of the immense fortune, twenty millions of livres, (near a million sterling,) which the cardinal had left her. In the year 1675, she came to England, in consequence of the intrigues of a party at the English court, who were desirous to get rid of the Duchess of Portsmouth, and hoped that the revival of the king's passion for his "old love" might destroy the ascendancy of the reigning favourite. As soon as she arrived, the king gave her a pension of four thousand pounds a year; but she neglected her game, and even engaged in another amour; a piece of imprudence quite unexpected on the part of so

\* This is no longer the case at Covent Garden, under the management of Mr. Macready.

thorough-paced an *intrigante*, but which defeated the object for which she came to England.

This lady, who, to the fascinations of extraordinary wit and beauty, joined a total destitution of every religious and moral principle, was certainly one of the most dangerous women of her time, and contributed, in no small degree, to the corruption of manners which then prevailed among the English aristocracy. Even her worldly uncle, Cardinal Mazarin, was shocked with her open disregard of the duties of religion. He one day told her and her sister, Madame de Bouillon, that they had neither piety nor honour; adding, "at least, if you will not hear mass for God's sake, do it for the world's." The well-known poet, St. Evremont, who appears to have been concerned in the intrigues connected with her coming to England, resided with her at Chelsea, and gives an account of her manner of living there. She had a sort of assembly at her house, which was frequented by the principal nobility, and persons distinguished for their wit and talents; and where the amusements consisted of conversation, in which subjects of religion and philosophy, as well as of literature and the fine arts, were discussed with the utmost freedom; deep play; and musical entertainments. Among other novelties, the game of basnet was introduced; the bank being kept by a French adventurer of the name of Marin, who shared with the duchess in the profits of the establishment. The Earl of Godolphin told Sir Robert Walpole that he had played at the Duchess of Mazarin's, and that, in consideration of her poverty, it was customary to leave a guinea under the cloth upon the table.

The musical entertainments at the house of the duchess were chiefly dramatic, and are celebrated for their magnificence. The singers were the principal female performers from the theatres, and the instrumental band consisted of the most eminent masters of the time. Sir John Hawkins says, "It is supposed that the design of introducing the Italian opera into England was first concerted in this assembly." We can see no grounds for this supposition. There is no appearance of any attempt having been made by the Duchess of Mazarin, or the aristocratic members of her musical coterie, to introduce the Italian opera. Nor is it at all likely that there should. If not born, she was educated, a Frenchwoman, and derived all her opinions and tastes from the court of Louis XIV., where she never could have acquired a predilection for Italian music. Had she entertained any such design, moreover, her first step towards the introduction of the Italian opera would have been to make her own dramatic entertainments of that description. But the music at her concerts was French, and under the direction of Paisible, a French musician of considerable eminence. It seems evident, therefore, that the Duchess of Mazarin, by her entertainments, so much frequented by the world of fashion, contributed to foster and preserve the taste for French music which prevailed during the whole of Charles the Second's reign, and gave way, not to the influence of Italian music, but to the native genius of Purcell.

## CHAPTER VI.

Dryden—"The State of Innocence"—*Albion and Albanus*—Purcell—*Dido and Æneas*—Purcell's instrumental music—"The Tempest."

About this time Dryden turned his attention to the musical drama. In 1678 he published his play, called *The State of Innocence and Fall of Man*, which he formally denominated an opera. This, however, is an improper designation; for the piece contains no lyrical poetry, the music employed in it being entirely instrumental. It was never performed, nor can we suppose that it was ever intended for actual representation. Such scenes as the following could not be exhibited on the stage.

"Scene I. represents a chaos, or a confused mass of matter; the stage is almost wholly dark; a symphony of warlike music is heard for some time; then from the heavens (which are opened) fall the rebellious angels, wheeling in air, and seeming transfixed with thunderbolts. The bottom of the stage, being opened, receives the angels, who fall out of sight. Tunes of victory are played and an hymn sung: angels discovered above, brandishing their swords; the music ceasing, and the heavens being closed, the scene shifts, and on a sudden

represents hell; part of the scene is a lake of brimstone, or rolling fire: the earth of a burnt colour; the fallen angels appear on the lake, lying prostrate: a tune of horror and lamentation is heard." Lucifer, raising himself on the burning lake, begins the piece by exclaiming,—

"Is this the seat our conqueror has given?  
And this the climate we must change for heaven?"

Other devils rise in succession: and an infernal council is held, like that in the opening of the *Paradise Lost*.

Adam and Eve are afterwards introduced, "as just created." The manners and conversation of the primeval pair, as represented by Dryden, exhibit marks of the false and corrupted taste of the age. There is a want of the purity and simplicity in the sentiments and images, which are so beautifully preserved by Milton; and Eve especially, at the very outset, evinces no inconsiderable share of vanity, coquetry, and love of rule, from which the "general mother" of the fair sex must surely have been wholly free in the "state of innocence." She enters, wondering at herself—

"Like myself I see nothing: from each tree  
The feather'd kind peep down to look on me;  
And beasts, with up-cast eyes, forsake their shade,  
And gaze, as if I were to be obey'd.  
Sure I am something which they wish to be,  
And cannot; I myself am proud of me."

How quick-sighted to the general admiration she excites; and what *naïveté* in "I myself am proud of me!" In the same spirit is her apprehension that, when she grants her lover's suit, she will lose her much-loved sovereignty; and her fears of his *infidelity* have almost the effect of burlesque.

It is difficult to imagine what could have induced Dryden to think of this production. In his preface he gives some reasons for "publishing an opera which was never acted." Many incorrect copies," he says, "had got abroad, full of errors and absurdities, so that he was obliged to publish, in self-defence. He confesses his obligations to Milton, and acknowledges the inferiority of his "mean production" to the sublime work of that poet. Knowing, perhaps, that Milton had taken the idea of the *Paradise Lost* from an Italian mystery, and that he had intended at first to give his poem a dramatic form, Dryden may have thought of accomplishing the design which Milton had abandoned. It is said by Aubrey, that Dryden made a personal application to Milton for permission to make the attempt; and that the old poet answered with indifference, "Aye, you may tag my verses if you will."

Dryden's first opera, that was actually represented, was *Albion and Albanus*, which was performed at the Duke's Theatre, in 1685. This piece was nearly finished in the lifetime of Charles II., though not performed till after his death. It had a political object, to favour the interest of the court; and was an allegorical representation of the restoration of the Stuart family to the throne, and the king's recent victory over his whig opponents. It contains the leading incidents in the life of Charles II.; the restoration, and return of the king and the Duke of York, under the names of Albion and Albanus; and the popish plot, hatched by a council of fiends, who send Democracy and Zeal, with Dr. Titus Oates in their train, to propagate it on earth. The return of the Duke of York and his beautiful princess, and the rejoicings in heaven and earth on the king's attaining complete power, were the intended termination of the drama: but, in consequence of the death of Charles, the conclusion was changed to the apothecosis of Albion, and the succession of Albanus to the uncontrolled dominion over a willing people.

• The Italian Mystery which suggested to Milton the subject of the *Paradise Lost*, is the *Adamo* of Adreini, in which the sacred subject, as usual with those productions, is unintentionally burlesqued. The drama opens with a grand chorus of angels, who sing thus:—

"Let the rainbow be the fiddle-stick of the fiddle of heaven,  
Let the spheres be the strings, and the stars the musical notes;  
Let the new-born breezes make the pauses and sharps,  
And let Time be careful to beat the measure."

It may easily be imagined that a piece of this political character, produced at a time when the nation was almost ripe for the revolution which took place within three years afterwards, could not be very congenial to the public feeling. It was brought upon the stage with great splendour, but was coldly received. Its death-blow was the news of Monmouth's invasion, which reached London on Saturday the 13th of June, 1685, during its performance for the sixth time: the audience broke up in confusion, and it was never repeated.

This piece, notwithstanding its unhappy subject, is full of Dryden's characteristic vigour of thought and expression; and the lyrical poetry, in particular, is beautifully sweet and flowing. The preface is excellent. Though Dryden could not have been conversant with the Italian opera, yet the acuteness of his mind enabled him to form a clear conception of the musical drama, and to give rules for its composition and performance, which, in many respects, are of permanent and universal application.

"An opera," he says, "is a poetical tale or fiction, represented by vocal and instrumental music, adorned with scenes, machines, and dancing. The supposed persons of this musical drama are generally supernatural, as gods and goddesses, and heroes, which at least are descended from them, and are in due time to be adopted into their number. The subject, therefore, being extended beyond the limits of human nature, admits of that sort of marvellous and surprising conduct which is rejected in other plays. Human impossibilities are to be received as they are in faith; because, when gods are introduced, a supreme power is to be understood, and second causes are out of doors; yet propriety is to be observed even here. Phæbus must foretell, Mercury must charm with his caduceus, and Juno must reconcile the quarrels of the marriage bed: to conclude, they must all act according to their distinct and peculiar characters. If the persons represented were to speak upon the stage, it would follow, of necessity, that the expressions should be lofty, figurative, and majestic: but the nature of an opera denies the frequent use of these poetical ornaments; for vocal music, though it often admits a loftiness of sound, yet always exacts an harmonious sweetness; or, to distinguish yet more justly, the recitative part of the opera requires a more masculine beauty of expression and sound. The other, which, for want of a proper English word, I must call the *songish* part, must abound in the softness and variety of numbers: its principal intention being to please the hearing, rather than to gratify the understanding. As the first inventors of any art or science, provided they have brought it to perfection, are, in reason, to give laws to it; so, whosoever undertakes the writing of an opera, is obliged to imitate the Italians, who have not only invented but perfected this sort of dramatic musical entertainment. We know that, for some centuries, the knowledge of music has flourished principally in Italy, the mother of learning and of arts; that poetry and painting have been there restored, and so cultivated by Italian masters, that all Europe has been enriched out of their treasury.

"It is almost needless to speak any thing of that noble language in which the musical drama was first invented and performed. All who are conversant in the Italian cannot but observe that it is the softest, the sweetest, the most harmonious, not only of any modern tongue, but even beyond any of the learned. It seems indeed to have been invented for the sake of poetry and music: the vowels are so abounding in all words, especially in terminations of them, that, excepting in some few monosyllables, the whole language ends in them. Then the pronunciation is so manly and so sonorous, that their very speaking has more music in it than Dutch poetry and song. It has withal derived so much copiousness and eloquence from the Greek and Latin, in the composition of words and the formation of them, that if, after all, we must call it barbarous, it is the most beautiful and learned of any barbarian in modern tongues; and we may at least as justly praise it as Pyrrhus did the Roman discipline and martial order, that it was of barbarians, (for so the Greeks called all other nations,) but had in it nothing of barbarity. This language has, in a manner, been refined and purified from the Gothic ever since the days of Dante, which is above four hundred years ago: and the French, who now cast a longing eye to their country, are not less ambitious to possess their elegance in poetry and music; in both which

they labour at impossibilities. It is true, indeed, they have reformed their tongue, and brought both their prose and poetry to a standard; the sweetness, as well as the purity, is much improved, by throwing off the unnecessary consonants, which made their spelling tedious and their pronunciation harsh; but after all, as nothing can be improved beyond its own species, or farther than its original nature will allow—as an ill voice, though ever so thoroughly instructed in the rules of music, can be never brought to sing harmoniously, nor many an honest critic ever arrive to be a good poet; so neither can the natural harshness of the French, or their perpetual ill accent, be ever refined into perfect harmony like the Italian. The English has yet more natural disadvantages than the French; our original Teutonic, consisting mostly in monosyllables, and these encumbered with consonants, cannot possibly be freed from those inconveniences. The rest of our words, which are derived from the Latin chiefly, and the French, with some small sprinklings of Greek, Italian, and Spanish, are some relief in poetry, and help us to soften our uncouth numbers; which, together with our English genius, incomparably beyond the trifling of the French, in the nobler parts of verse, will justly give us the pre-eminence. But, on the other hand, the effluency of our pronunciation (a defect common to us and the Danes) and our scarcity of female rhymes, have left the advantage of musical composition for songs, though not for recitative, to our neighbours."

When Dryden, in this fine passage, speaks of the Italian opera as being in its subject confined in a great measure to the persons and incidents of the ancient mythology, he gives an exact description of it as it then existed: though the range of the Italian *opera seria* is now co-extensive with that of tragedy. But when he speaks of the composition of the different kinds of poetry which belong to the musical drama, his principles are applicable to all countries and all times. The Italian language has never received a nobler or juster eulogy: but when he describes the English as being inferior to the French in respect to euphony and fitness for lyrical purposes, he delivers an opinion in which few of his countrymen, in our days, will acquiesce. It is difficult to understand what is meant by the effluency of pronunciation which he describes as being prevalent in his time. Whatever it was, it seems to have been some fashion which has passed away: for there is nothing in the modern pronunciation of English, as the language is plainly and unaffectedly spoken in the pulpit or the senate, at the bar, on the stage, or in good society, that can be characterised as effluinate. As a musical language, though the English, like all other languages, must yield to the Italian in smoothness, clearness, and facility of utterance, yet, in all these particulars, it is unquestionably superior to the French. But when Dryden wrote the opera to which this preface was prefixed, the *Gallomania* raged at the English court; and Dryden, as the poet of the court, doubtless found it convenient to flatter the fashionable taste, of which the king himself was the principal votary.

That Dryden was desirous to court the favour of Charles, by yielding to his French prepossessions, is evident from his employing Grabut, a Frenchman, to compose the music of *Albion and Albanus*, though he could not have been ignorant of the infinitely superior merit of his countryman Purcell, whose transcendent genius had already broke out in all its splendour. This Grabut was an obscure musician, whose name is not to be found in the French annals of the art. He appears to have come to England with Cambert, a musician of some eminence, who, about the year 1672, was made master of the king's band. Grabut composed the music to a translation of Cambert's French opera of Ariadne; or, more probably, only adapted Cambert's original music to the English words. This piece, which was performed with little success in 1674, seems to have been the only work of Grabut's prior to *Albion and Albanus*: but he was in favour at court, and was consequently employed by Dryden.

The poet, however, appears to have thought that this step required some justification. In the preface, from which we have already quoted, he informs the public, that the opera had been rehearsed several times in presence of the king, "who had publicly declared, more than once, that the compositions and choruses were more just and more beautiful than any he had heard in Eng-

land." Dryden then praises Grabut very warmly; and adds—"This I say, not to flatter him, but to do him right: because, among some English musicians, and their scholars, who are sure to judge after them, the imputation of being a Frenchman is enough to make a party who maliciously endeavour to decry him. But the knowledge of Latin and Italian poets, both which he possesses, besides his skill in music, and his being acquainted with all the performances of the French operas, adding to these the good sense to which he is born, have raised him to a degree above any man who shall pretend to be his rival on our stage. When any of our countrymen excel him, I shall be glad, for the sake of Old England, to be shown my error: in the meantime, let virtue be commended, though in the person of a stranger." This passage gave great and general dissatisfaction. The original offence of giving the preference to an obscure and worthless musician was aggravated by the injurious and disparaging manner in which, to exalt his character, the English musicians, including the already illustrious Purcell, were treated. The consequence was, that Dryden was exposed, not only to serious attacks, but to squibs and lampoons of the most severe and poignant description.

The following is the conclusion of the scene in which the Popish Plot is hatched by a pandemonian council of fiends and infernal deities. The description of the notorious Dr. Titus Oates could hardly be paralleled in strength of invective. When *Zelota* is about to be dismissed on her errand to stir up evil against the king, she says:—

"You've all forgot  
To forge a plot  
In seeming care of Albion's life;  
Inspire the crowd  
With clamours loud,  
To involve his brother and his wife.

*Alecto.* Take, of a thousand souls at thy command,  
The basest, blackest of the Stygian band,  
One that will swear to all they can invent,  
So thoroughly damn'd that he ne'er can repent:  
One, often sent to earth  
And still at every birth  
He took a deeper stain;  
One, that in Adam's time was Cain;  
One, that was burnt in Sodom's flame,  
For crimes even here too black to name;  
One, who through every flame of ill has run:  
One, who in Naboth's days was Belial's son;  
One, who has gained a body fit for sin;  
Where all his crimes  
Of former times  
Lie crowded in a skin.

*Pluto.* Take him,  
Make him  
What you please;  
For he can be  
A rogue with ease,  
One for mighty mischief born;  
He can swear and be forsworn.

*Pluto and Alecto.* Take him, make him what you please,  
For he can be a rogue with ease.\*

*Pluto.* Let us laugh, let us laugh, let us laugh at our woes,  
The wretch that is damned has nothing to lose.  
Ye Furies, advance  
With the ghosts in a dance:  
'Tis a jubilee when the world is in trouble;  
When the people rebel  
We frolic in hell;  
But when the king falls, the pleasure is double.

[A single entry of a devil, followed by an entry of twelve devils.]

*Chorus.* Let us laugh, let us laugh, let us laugh at our woes,  
The wretch that is damned hath nothing to lose."

\* Oates was alive at this time, and lived many years afterwards. He shook off, in some degree, the load of infamy which had overwhelmed him; regained some footing in society; and was rewarded for his virtues, by King William, with a pension of 400*l* a year!

In the preface to *Albion and Albanus*, Dryden says that this opera "was only intended as a prologue to a play of the nature of *The Tempest*; which is a tragedy mixed with opera, or a drama written in blank verse, adorned with scenes, machines, songs, and dances; so that the fable of it is all spoken and acted by the best of the comedians; the other part of the entertainment to be performed by the same singers and dancers who are introduced in the present opera." The only piece at all answering this description, subsequently produced by him, was *King Arthur*, which seems, therefore, to have been the tragedy here alluded to, though it did not make its appearance till the year 1691, six years afterwards.

During this interval, Dryden seems to have not only acquired a proper sense of the merits of Purcell, but to have entered into friendly intercourse with him. Before taking a review of their joint labours, it may be proper to give a slight sketch of the previous career of this illustrious musician.

Henry Purcell was born in the year 1658. His father, Henry Purcell, was a musician, and one of the gentlemen of the chapel royal at the restoration of Charles II. Some of his compositions, which are still extant, indicate a respectable degree of talent and knowledge of his art. He died in 1664, when his son was only six years old. It is not ascertained from whom young Purcell received his first instructions in music; but it was most probably from Captain Cook, who was then master of the children of the chapel royal. He afterwards received lessons from Dr. Blow; a circumstance in the life of that eminent musician which was considered of so much importance, that, in the inscription on his tomb, it is mentioned that he was "Master to the famous Mr. Henry Purcell."

His genius showed itself at a very early age. While he was yet a singing boy in the king's chapel, he composed several anthems which are sung to this day. This is, perhaps, one of the most remarkable instances of precocity that has been recorded; for the anthem, demanding a knowledge of the laws of counterpoint which, in general, can be obtained only by long and severe study, seems to be in an especial manner beyond the reach of a juvenile composer. To have produced therefore, pieces of this kind, which, for nearly two centuries, have kept their place among the standard works of our ecclesiastical musicians, indicated an inborn creative power, which, unless to a kindred spirit, is wholly inconceivable.

At the age of eighteen, Purcell received the honourable appointment of organist of Westminster Abbey; and in his twenty-fourth year he was chosen to be one of the three organists of the chapel royal. By this time he had composed many of those anthems which are considered as being among the noblest specimens of our cathedral music. Notwithstanding, however, his ecclesiastical situations and employments, he very early turned his attention to dramatic music, which seems to have been especially congenial to his inclination as well as his genius. Tom Brown, in his letters from the Dead to the Living, notices this bent of Purcell's mind. In a letter from Dr. Blow to Purcell, he makes the writer say, that persons of their profession are equally attracted by the church and the playhouse, so that they are, like Mahomet's coffin, suspended between heaven and earth.\*

His first essay in theatrical music was made when he was nineteen. Josiah Priest, a celebrated teacher of dancing, who had long been the composer of the court-ballets, and had consequently acquired a taste for the stage, wished to get up a private dramatic performance by his pupils. He accordingly got Tate to write a little opera called *Dido and Æneas*, and prevailed on Purcell to compose the music for it. The piece was represented by some of the young ladies who attended Priest's school, before a select audience of their relatives and friends, with great applause. The music, in particular, was found to be beautiful; and, as it is extant, we are enabled to know that this opinion of it was perfectly just.

*Dido and Æneas* is a wonderful work, considering the youth of the composer. As a whole, it is deficient in the finish and mellowness which characterise the productions of his riper years. But, from beginning to end, it sparkles with genius, and contains beauties which even he himself has not surpassed. He was happy in his

\* This joke, by the way, is an anachronism; for Blow survived Purcell.

subject, which was treated by Mr. Priest with good dramatic effect. The piece opens with the arrival of *Aeneas* at Carthage, and ends with the death of Dido, after her desertion by her faithless lover. Dido's recitative, in which, after she has been listening to *Aeneas's* story, she expresses her admiration of her guest, affords instances of that false expression, produced by seizing upon particular words, which is so common among composers, but is rarely to be found in Purcell's later works. Dido says,

"Whence could so much virtue spring?  
What storms, what battles, did he sing!  
Anchises' valour, mix'd with Venus' charms;  
How soft in peace, and yet how fierce in arms!"

One unmingled sentiment of pleasure and admiration pervades this passage: yet, when Dido comes to the word "soft" she falls upon it by a chromatic semitone, and repeats it twice with a languishing *appoggiatura*; and in an instant afterwards breaks out into a boisterous roulade upon the word "fierce." The word "storms," too, gives occasion for a little musical mimicry. Another fault of a similar kind occurs in the scene where Dido and *Aeneas* are overtaken by the storm. Dido exclaims,

"The skies are clouded: hark how thunder  
Rends the mountain rocks asunder!"

According to the approved principles of musical painting, the war of the elements should have been depicted by the tumultuous sounds of the orchestra, the voice using the simple accents of exclamation. But, instead of this, Dido sets about mimicking the thunder, by rolling out that word in a long rattling roulade. These things should be marked, in the works of the greatest masters, as beacons to be avoided; as students are fully as apt to copy the faults as the beauties of their models.

The fault in the first passage above quoted is redeemed by the true and beautiful expression given to the phrase immediately following, where Dido says, "But ah! I fear I pity him too much!" and by the lovely chorus,

"Fear no danger to ensue,  
The hero loves as well as you;"

sung, to re-assure her, by Anna and her other attendants. Its graceful tranquillity is perfectly delicious. The chorus "To the hills and the vales, to the rocks and the mountains," is "redolent of spring," and full of the most delightful freshness. But, to our feeling, the flow of the melody is checked, and its beauty impaired, by a single crude note—the B flat suddenly introduced (the key being G major) at the words "cool shady fountains;" an unnecessary and unsuccessful attempt at musical expression where it is not wanted.

The introduction of a malignant sorceress, by whose machinations *Aeneas* is made to abandon his mistress, gives occasion for a great deal of admirable music. The invocation by the sorceress, and the choral responses and wild laughter of the infernal spirits, are striking and unearthly, and would have as powerful an effect as any thing in the *Freischütz*. The little duet in this scene, between two of the witches, "But ere we this perform," in free canon, is remarkable for its ingenuity of contrivance, and easy flow of melody: and the full chorus which follows, and concludes the scene, has the broad simplicity of Matthew Lock.

The second act is full of beauties. In the scene in which the lovers and their attendants, while hunting, are overtaken by the storm, the chorus "Haste, haste, to the town," by the intricate movement of the parts, paints the confusion and agitation of the party. A chorus of *Aeneas's* sailors, preparing to weigh anchor, is of a bold and somewhat comic character. We are again introduced to the infernal convulse, whose chorus of demoniacal exultation at Dido's approaching fate, is one of the most powerful of Purcell's compositions. The impassioned dialogue between the lovers as they are about to part, is a beautiful specimen of true English recitative, in which the accents and inflexions of the language are made subservient to the purposes of musical expression. The last words of the queen are formed into a little air, "When I am laid in earth," which sounds like the dying murmurs of a broken heart. The melody is constructed on a ground bass; a form of composition now obsolete, as imposing needless restrictions on the musician. Yet

sometimes, as in the present instance, it is a source of beauty. The recurrence, over and over again, of the same few melancholy notes in the bass, strikes sadly on the ear, and deepens the expression of the song. The piece concludes with a soft mournful chorus.

This beautiful opera, which was produced in 1677, immediately attracted the attention of the managers of the theatres, and led to Purcell's being engaged in writing for the stage.

The musical drama not having yet a separate existence, it was still customary to introduce music into both tragedy and comedy. Most of the plays of that time had overtures and pieces to be performed between the acts, composed expressly for them; and incidental songs, not sung by the personages of the drama, but by singers introduced, as it were, for their entertainment. From this time, these overtures, act tunes and songs, were frequently composed by Purcell. In this manner, he embellished, as it may be called, the play of *Abelazor*, which appeared in 1677; *Timon of Athens*, (altered from Shakespeare by Shadwell) in 1678; Lee's *Theodosius, or the Force of Love*, in 1680; and other pieces which shall be afterwards mentioned.

A collection of these instrumental pieces was published, in 1697, after Purcell's death, by his widow, under the title of "A Collection of Ayres, composed for the Theatre, and on other occasions, by the late Mr. Henry Purcell." They are in four parts, for two violins, tenor and bass; and are so pleasing, that they were used in the theatres till the middle of the last century, when the progress of orchestral music necessarily caused them to be laid aside.

In 1683, he published twelve sonatas for two violins and a bass, with a preface containing the following interesting passage, in which he admits his obligations to the Italian composers. "The author has faithfully endeavoured a just imitation of the most famed Italian masters, principally to bring the seriousness and gravity of that sort of music into vogue and reputation among our countrymen, whose humour it is time now should begin to loathe the levity and balladry of our neighbours. The attempt he confesses to be bold and daring; there being pens and artists of more eminent abilities, much better qualified for the employment than his or himself, which he well hopes these his weak endeavours will in due time provoke and inflame to a more accurate undertaking. He is not ashamed to own his unskilfulness in the Italian language, but that is the unhappiness of his education, which cannot justly be counted his fault; however, he thinks he may warrantably affirm, that he is not mistaken in the power of the Italian notes, or elegance of their compositions." This work was so well received, that he soon afterwards published another set, containing ten sonatas, one of which, from its peculiar excellence, acquired the name of the *Golden Sonata*.

These sonatas, or trios, evidently belong to the same school as those of Corelli. The trios of the great Italian composer were published in the same year, and could not have served as a model to Purcell, who, in acknowledging his obligation to "the most famed Italian masters" in this species of composition, must have alluded to Torelli and Bassani, the latter of whom was Corelli's master. Purcell's sonatas, in some respects, are even superior to those of the great Italian composer;—for they contain movements which, in depth of learning and ingenuity of harmonical combination, without the least appearance of labour or restraint, surpass any thing to be found in the works of Corelli; but Corelli had the advantage of being a great violinist, while Purcell, who was not only no performer himself, but probably had never heard a great performer, had no means, except the perusal of Italian scores, of forming an idea of the genius and powers of the instrument. This disadvantage prevented Purcell from striking out new and effective violin passages, and produced mechanical awkwardness which a master of the instrument would have avoided; but it did not disable him from exhibiting taste and fancy; and every admirer of the works of Corelli will take pleasure in these sonatas of Purcell.

Dryden, who had done Purcell injustice, afterwards became his warm friend and one of his greatest admirers. After the death of Charles II. the poet must have found himself freed from the trammels imposed on him by the vitiated taste of that monarch and his court, and a personal intercourse between Dryden and Purcell arose from the circumstance of Purcell's having been the

musical instructor of Lady Elizabeth Howard, the poet's wife. When the play of *The Tempest* was revived in 1690, Purcell was employed to compose new music for it.

*The Tempest* had been altered from Shakespeare by Davenant and Dryden, and represented at Davenant's theatre in 1667. In the preface, which is written by Dryden, he says, "Sir William Davenant did me the honour to join me with him in the alteration of this play;" but what share Dryden had in the alterations does not appear. They appear to have been chiefly made by Davenant; though they bear many marks of Dryden's hand. The play, as thus altered, was published in the year 1670.

Shakespeare's play underwent these alterations for the purpose, chiefly of affording room for scenic decoration and music. But this might have been done without the interpolation of so much inferior matter, and the introduction of those characters which destroy the majestic simplicity of the original design. The idea of contrasting Shakespeare's original character of a woman who has never seen a man, with a man who has never seen a woman, is puerile in itself, and in its execution, wanting in refinement and purity. That which, in Miranda, is charming innocence and simplicity, becomes unmanly silliness in the counterpart: and the character of Dorinda, the sister given to Miranda, is not only unnecessary, but indelicate. The play, thus metamorphosed, cannot be read (for it is now never represented) without disgust; and it is surprising, that Dryden (who, in the prologue to this very piece, has paid so noble a tribute to the genius of Shakespeare) could have lent his sanction to such an act of sacrilege.

When the music came to be composed by Purcell, several additions were made to the lyrical portion, which are not in the edition of the play published in 1670; and, in other parts, the words are considerably altered.

The music of *The Tempest* consists almost entirely of the songs and choruses of the aerial inhabitants of Prospero's enchanted island, described by the poet as being

"———— full of noises,  
Sounds and sweet airs, that give delight, and hurt  
not."

The strange and wild character of these unearthly strains is beautifully supported, and the listener partakes of the feeling of the bewildered Ferdinand, when, amazed at the invisible chorus which reminds him of his drowned father, he exclaims,

"This is no mortal business, nor no sound  
That the earth owes!"

The scene of the spirits deputed to bewilder the conspirators contains the song, "Arise, ye subterranean winds; a powerful composition, in which rolling divisions, finely adapted to a bass voice, are used with happy imitative effect. In this song, however, Purcell has fallen into the very common error of giving to particular words an expression at variance with the general tone of the poetry. The spirit is commanding the winds to

"Drive these wretches to that part o' the isle,  
Where nature never yet did smile;  
Cause fogs and damps, whirlwinds and earthquakes  
there;  
There let them howl and languish in despair."

On the word "howl," the singer howls on one note for two bars. This is a piece of musical mimicry, inconsistent with the gravity of the style; but it is not so bad as the next passage, in which, on the word "languish," the singer languishes, for three bars, through a drawing descent of semitones. Though the spirit desires that the wretches whom he is commissioned to punish may languish in despair, there is no reason that he should assume a languishing air in saying so. Nothing can be more exquisite than the fairy lightness of Ariel's little song, "Come unto these yellow sands," with its wild and simple burden. The masque, or pageant, presented by Prospero's spirits at the end of the play, is made a vehicle for some charming music. The recitative and air, for a bass (or rather baritone) voice in the character of Neptune, "Æolus, you must appear," is in a grand and dignified style. In the following air, "Come down, my blustersers," Æolus blusters through many long divisions; but the passage,

"To your prisons below,  
Down you must go,"

is remarkable for the very impressive utterance given to these words. The soprano air, "Halcyon days," sung by Amphitrite, is perfectly delicious. In this air it is impossible to overlook the beauty of the accompaniments. The charming passages given to the oboes, and the graceful motion of all the instrumental parts, show how much Purcell was in advance of his age, in this as well as other branches of his art. The chorus, "The nereids and tritons shall sing and play," is beautiful; and the famous duet and chorus, "No stars again shall hurt you," a piece of rich and resonant harmony, forms a brilliant conclusion to the whole. There is a song for Caliban, "The owl is abroad, the bat and the toad," which one might suppose Weber to have imagined.

Some parts of this music may still occasionally be heard at concerts; but it is long since the piece to which it belongs has been performed. We can hardly, however, imagine a more delightful theatrical entertainment than Shakespeare's beautiful play, unpolluted by Davenant's trash, with the music of Purcell; and we hope yet to see *The Tempest*, in this form, restored to its place on the stage.

## CHAPTER VII.

### King Arthur—The Indian Queen—Tyrannic Love.

The revival of *The Tempest*, with Purcell's music, in 1690, was followed by the appearance of *King Arthur* in 1691. This piece was written by Dryden, and the music in it composed by Purcell. It was brought out in a splendid manner, and had great success.

*King Arthur* is a tale of love, war, and enchantment; its incidents are fantastic, but ingenious and entertaining. The story consists of the love of Arthur, the ancient British king, for Emmeline, the daughter of a tributary prince; her abduction by his rival Oswald, a heathen king of Kent; her recovery from his hands, and union with her lover. The evil designs of Oswald are favoured by Osmond, a Saxon magician, and his subservient evil spirits; while they are thwarted by Merlin, the famous enchanter, and the beneficent spirits under his command. The spirits are taken from the Rosicrucian philosophy; Grimbald, the malignant fiend, being a gnome, or spirit of earth, while his adversary Philidel, is a sylph, or spirit of air. This machinery is well managed. There is a wild grandeur in the evil nature of Grimbald; and the character of Philidel, an angel, who, though fallen, is not lost, but feels repentance and hopes for pardon,—is original and beautiful. The blindness of Emmeline adds interest to her innocent simplicity, and gives rise to many pretty and fanciful passages.

In the first scene, Arthur and Conon, Emmeline's father, are engaged in discourse. She enters.

"Em. O father, father, I am sure you're here,  
Because I see your voice.

Arth. No; thou mistak'st thy hearing for thy sight:  
He's gone, my Emmeline;  
And I but stay to gaze on those fair eyes,  
Which cannot view the conquests they have made.  
Oh starlike night, dark only to thyself,  
But full of glory, as those lamps of heaven,  
That see not, when they shine!

Em. What is this heaven, and stars, and night, and day,

To which you thus compare my eyes and me?

I understand you when you say you love;  
For, when my father clasps my hand in his,  
That's cold, and I can feel it hard and wrinkled;  
But when you grasp it, then I sigh and pant,  
And something smarts and tickles at my heart.

Arth. Oh artless love, where the soul moves the tongue,

And only nature speaks what nature thinks!  
Had she but eyes!

Em. Just now you said I had:

I see them; I have two.

Arth. But neither see.

Em. I'm sure they hear you then:

What can your eyes do more?

Arth. They see your beauties.

Em. Do not I see? You have a face like mine—

Two hands, and two round, pretty, rising breasts,  
That leave like mine.

Arth. But you describe a woman;

Nor is it sight, but touching with your hands.

Em. Then 'tis my hand that sees, and that's all one,—  
For is not seeing, touching with your eyes?

Arth. No; for I see at distance, when I touch not.

Em. If you can see so far, and yet not touch,

I fear you see my naked legs and feet

Quite through my clothes. Pray do not see so well.

Arth. Fear not, sweet innocence;

I view the lovely features of your face,  
Your lips' carnation, your dark-shaded eyebrows,  
Black eyes and snow-white forehead; all the colours  
That make your beauty, and produce my love.

Em. Nay, then, you do not love on equal terms;—

I love you dearly without all these helps;

I cannot see your lips' carnation,

Your shaded eyebrows, nor your milk-white eyes.

Arth. You still mistake.

Em. Indeed I thought you had a nose and eyes,

And such a face as mine: have not men faces?

Arth. Oh, none like yours, so excellently fair.

Em. Then would I had no face, for I would be

Just such a one as you.

Arth. Alas! 'tis vain to instruct your innocence;

You have no notion of light or colours.

[Trumpet sounds within.

Em. Why, is not that a trumpet?

Arth. Yes.

Em. I knew it.

And I can tell you how the sound on't looks;

It looks as if it had an angry fighting face.

Arth. 'Tis now indeed a sharp unpleasant sound,

Because it calls me hence from her I love,

To meet ten thousand foes.

Em. How do so many men e'er come to meet?

This devil trumpet vexes them, and then

They feel about for one another's faces;

And so they meet and kill.

Arth. I'll tell you all when we have gain'd the field.

One kiss of your fair hand the pledge of conquest,

And so a short farewell.

[Exit.

Em. My heart and vows go with him to the fight.

May every foe be that which they call blind,

And none of all their swords have eyes to find him!

But lead me nearer to the trumpet's face;

For that brave sound upholds my fainting heart;

And, while I hear, methinks I fight my part."

The scene in which Emmeline recovers her sight by means of Philidel, is calculated to produce a charming effect on the stage; but we must turn to the musical parts of the drama.

The scene in the first act, of the great sacrifice offered by the Saxons before their battle with the Britons, is full of barbarous grandeur. It opens with the songs of the priests, accompanying the sacrifice of three milk-white steeds to Woden, Thor, and Freya. The choral shout, "We have sacrificed!" at the end of each recitation by a single voice, is magnificent. The men who have devoted themselves as voluntary victims, are addressed by the priests,—

"Brave souls, to be renown'd in story;

Honour prizing, death despising,

Fame acquiring by expiring,—

Die, and reap the fruit of glory!"

This chorus opens with a short but energetic *fugato*, and passes into a dark and gloomy strain. After a pause, a single voice sings, to a bold and lively air—

"I call you all

To Woden's hall,

Your temples round

With ivy bound,

In goblets crown'd

And plenteous bowls of burnish'd gold.

Where ye shall laugh,

And dance, and quaff

The juice that makes the Britons bold."

And the victims respond, in joyous chorus,

"To Woden's hall,

All, all, all, all;

Where in plenteous bowls of burnish'd gold

We shall laugh,

And dance, and quaff

The juice that makes the Britons bold."

The battle-song of the Britons, "Come if you dare," is a noble burst of martial ardour, to which the musician has given full expression. The choral part, written in plain counterpoint, may be conceived to be a whole army's shouts of defiance and of victory.

Arthur being left alone in pursuit of the flying foe, Grimbald, the malignant spirit, accosts him in disguise, and attempts to lead him astray, while Philidel, interposing, warns him of the deceit. Philidel's song, with the chorus of her attendant spirits,—“Hither, hither, this way bend,” is exquisitely light and delicate. Grimbald's air, "Let not a moon-born elf mislead ye," has the plain simplicity of his assumed character, and is at the same time smooth and beautiful. The dramatic effect of this scene is admirable.

The celebrated frost-scene, so well-known to the admirers of Purcell, is a sort of masque, exhibited by the magician Osmond to Emmeline, after she has recovered her sight, for the purpose of inducing her to listen to his addresses. The poetry and music are equally beautiful.

"Emmeline. I freeze, as if his impious art had fixed  
My feet to earth.

Osmond. But love shall thaw ye.

I'll show his force to countries caked with ice,  
Where the pale pole-star in the north of heaven  
Sits high, and on the frosty winter broods,—  
Yet there love reigns: For proof, this magic wand  
Shall change the mildness of sweet Britain's clime  
To Iceland, and the farthest Thule's frost,  
Where the proud god, disdaining winter's bounds,  
O'erleaps the fences of eternal snow,  
And with his warmth supplies the distant sun.

[Osmond strikes the ground with his wand; the scene changes to a prospect of winter in frozen countries. Cupid descends.

Cupid sings. What ho, thou genius of the  
clime, what ho!

I, y' stretch thou asleep beneath those hills of snow!  
Stretch out thy lazy limbs; awake, awake,  
And winter from thy furry mantle shake.

Genius arises.

Genius. What power art thou, who from below  
Hast made me rise unwillingly and slow,  
From beds of everlasting snow?  
See'st thou how stiff and wondrous old,  
Far unfit to bear the bitter cold?  
I can scarcely move, or draw my breath;  
Let me, let me freeze again to death.

Cupid. Thou doting fool, forbear, forbear;

What, dost thou dream of freezing here?

At Love's appearing, all the sky clearing,

The stormy winds their fury spare:

Winter subduing, and spring renewing,

My beams create a more glorious year.

Thou doting fool, forbear, forbear,

What, dost thou dream of freezing here?

Genius. Great Love, I know thee now;

Eldst of the gods art thou;

Heaven and earth by thee were made;

Human nature

Is thy creature,

Every where thou art obey'd.

Cupid. No part of my dominion shall be waste;

To spread my sway, and sing my praise,

Even here I will a people raise,

Of kind embracing lovers, and embraced.

[Cupid waves his wand, upon which the scene opens, and discovers a prospect of ice and snow to the end of the stage.

Singers and dancers, men and women, appear.

Man. See, see, we assemble,

Thy revels to hold;

Though quivering with cold,

We chatter and tremble.

Cupid. 'Tis I, 'tis I, 'tis I, that have warm'd ye;

In spite of cold weather,

I've brought you together;

'Tis I, 'tis I, 'tis I, that have arm'd ye.

Chorus. 'Tis love, 'tis love, 'tis love, that has  
warm'd us;